EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS®
THE KANG DYNASTY
BUSIEK • DAVIS • DWYER
MARVEL

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EARTH.
THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.
THE HATTERAS LINE INSTALLATIONS WILL NOT BE BUILT FOR 342 YEARS. THE THERMOSPHERE BARRAGE SHIELD FOR ANOTHER 67 AFTER THAT.
FROM THIS VANTAGE, MY SON, THIS PERSPECTIVE --
-- IT LOOKS SO HELPLESS, DOESN'T IT?
THAT IS BECAUSE -- IN THE SIMPLEST AND BLUNTEST OF STRATEGIC TERMS --
-- IT IS!
FATHER? YOU HAD SAID --
-- THAT THEY WERE NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, YES. BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE TO BE FEARED.
I HAVE FOUGHT COUNTLESS CAMPAIGNS -- BROKEN THE DEFENSES OF A THOUSAND THOUSAND WORLDS, ACROSS A THOUSAND CENTURIES --
-- AND HAVE MORE THAN MASTERED THE GREAT PRINCIPLES OF WAR.
AND THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT OF THOSE IS THIS: A GOOD COMMANDER CONTROLS THE BATTLEFIELD.
IF YOU HAVE A GREATER FORCE THAN THE ENEMY, IT IS NO DIFFICULTY TO MEET THEM HEAD TO HEAD -- CRUSH THEM WITH SUPERIOR FORCE.
BUT IF YOU ARE OUTNUMBERED, YOU MUST SUBVERT THE ENEMY FORCES, SHATTER THEIR CONFIDENCE THROW THEM INTO DISARRAY --
-- AND YOU MUST HAVE POSITION.
IF YOU ARE THE ONE BEING ATTACKED, THAT MEANS YOU ARE BEST OFF IN A PLACE THAT IS HARD TO REACH, THAT IS NATURALLY DEFENSIBLE.
IF YOU ARE ATTACKING, HOWEVER, YOU MUST HAVE EASIER ACCESS TO THE ENEMY THAN HE HAS TO YOU. IN SHORT, YOU WANT --

-- THE HIGH GROUND!
THE SPEAKER IS KANG, KNOWN TO MUCH OF THE POPULACE OF SEVERAL GALAXIES, IN CENTURIES YET TO COME, AS THE CONQUEROR.
THE RED-CLAD MAN WITH HIM IS HIS SON, THE SCARLET CENTURION.
THEIR LOCATION -- DAMOCLES BASE, WARPED IN FROM NINETEEN CENTURIES UP THE TIMELINE, AND CLOAKED FROM EXTERNAL DETECTION.
AND THEIR PURPOSE --
-- SHOULD, BY NOW -- BE QUITE CLEAR.
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY, THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS! IN
THE HIGH GROUND
BY KURT BUSIEK ALAN DAVIS & MARK FARMER
TOM SMITH COLORS RS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASS'T EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

THEN...?
YES. GET TO THE TRANSPORT CHAMBER, MY SON. OUR MOMENT IS AT HAND...
...AND THE AVENGERS, SHOULD THEY INVOLVE THEM-SELVES...
...WILL NOT WITHSTAND US!
AVENGERS MANSION. THE COMBAT SIMULATION ROOM.
NNNAH!
SHAMM
VERY GOOD, WARBIRD!
THE BATTROIDS ARE REGISTERING 44-TON IMPACTS!
NOT GOOD ENOUGH, GOLIATH!
WITH ALL THE ACTION WE'VE SEEN RECENTLY -- AND OUR NEW INCREASED VIGILANCE -- I'VE GOT TO KNOW MY POWERS' CURRENT LIMITS!
HER NAME IS CAROL DANVERS. ONCE, SHE CHANNELED THE POWER OF A STAR.
THAT LINK HAS BEEN SEVERED, HOWEVER -- HER POWER IS NO LONGER LIMITLESS. SHE MUST ADJUST TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, NEW CONCERNS --
WHOA!
KRNK
NICE EVASIVE ACTION, CAROL! YOU'RE --
-- WAIT! THE CORUSCI-BARS! YOU'RE HEADED RIGHT FOR -- !
I KNOW, DOC! BELIEVE ME --
I KN-N-OOW!
-- AND NEW STRATEGIES.
FOR FOUR SECONDS, SHE SHUDDERS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEETHING ENERGY --

-- THEN --
NN-AHH!
SHZZOM!
WELL. COLOR ME IMPRESSED. NINETY-TWO TONS OF IMPACT -- AND THAT'S STILL PROBABLY NOT YOUR LIMIT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT -- YOUR ABSORPTION OF AMBIENT ENERGY KEEPS YOUR STRENGTH, FLIGHT, AND PHOTONIC ABILITIES AT AN IMPRESSIVE LEVEL --
-- BUT THE OLD WIRING'S STILL THERE, AS IT WERE. GIVEN ENOUGH OF AN ENERGY SOURCE, YOU CAN TEMPORARILY BOOST THOSE POWER-LEVELS --
-- KICKING THEM WAY BEYOND YOUR BASELINE ABILITIES.
THANKS FOR RUNNING THE WORKOUT, DOC.
ONLY TOO GLAD, WARBIRD. IT'S A PLEASURE TO SEE A PRO IN ACTION -- AND HAVING THIS KIND OF UP-TO-DATE COMBAT READINESS DATA CAN'T HURT.
I SHOULD TALK TO JAN AND CAP --
-- ARRANGE TESTS LIKE THIS FOR THE WHOLE TEAM.
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. I'M OFF FOR THE SHOWERS.
AND AS SHE LEAVES, SOMETHING NAGS AT HER -- A FEELING OF FOREBODING, AS IF THE TEAM -- OR JUST HER -- FACES SOMETHING... SOMETHING DARK.
SHE HAD PRECOGNITIVE POWERS AS WELL, ONCE. BUT THEY, TOO, ARE LONG GONE...
NNNGH!
...AND SHE CAN'T PINPOINT THE FEELING.
NOT... NOT FAIR...!
THE... THE OTHER ONE GOT THIS... NOT ME! IT PROVED... PROVED HE WAS THE FAKE...!

ARIZONA. THE SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS.
THE CLATTER OF HOOFBEATS ECHOES OFF THE ROCKY HILLS -- A STACCATO CASCADE, THEN A CRESCENDO --
-- THEN --
WHOA! YOU'RE A FANTASTIC RIDER, WANDA! YOU NEVER TOLD ME...!
I GREW UP OUT-OF-DOORS, SIMON -- WITH THE TRANSIAN GYPSIES! I LEARNED TO RIDE ALMOST AS SOON AS I COULD WALK!
BUT SINCE COMING TO AMERICA, I'VE BEEN A REAL CITY GIRL -- I HAVEN'T GOTTEN BACK TO THIS SORT OF THING ANYWHERE NEAR OFTEN ENOUGH!
THANKS SO MUCH FOR SUGGESTING THIS -- A BREAK FROM THE INTENSITY OF AVENGERS MANSION WAS JUST WHAT I NEEDED!
I'M... I'M GLAD.
BUT WANDA... THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
SECOND CHANCES -- THE FOUNDATION I SET UP WITH MY OLD VIDEO PROFITS -- THEY WANT ME TO DO SOME NEW PROJECTS, SOME FUND-RAISING --
-- THEY WANT ME TAKING A MORE ACTIVE HAND, HELPNG THEM HELP PEOPLE.
MY AGENT THINKS IT'S A GOOD IDEA, TOO.
THAT'S GREAT -- YOU'VE BEEN WANTING SOMETHING YOU COULD SINK YOUR TEETH INTO, TO REESTABLISH YOUR LIFE. WHAT'S THE CATCH?
I'D HAVE TO RELOCATE. TO L.A.
WANDA...
...DO YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME?

L.A.? THAT'D BE -- I MEAN -- IT SOUNDS --
AND ALL SHE CAN THINK, FOR A MOMENT, IS, "HE CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD FOR ME. OUT OF LOVE FOR ME. HOW CAN ANYTHING COMPARE TO THAT?
"HOW CAN IT -- HOW CAN IT NOT BE EVERYTHING? ALL THAT MATTERS?"
I UNDERSTAND, WANDA. THIS WEEKEND'S A WELCOME BREAK, BUT YOU LIKE BEING AN AVENGER, BEING DEPUTY CHAIR. YOUR PLACE IS THERE --
-- AND I CAN'T ASK YOU TO LEAVE. I CAN SAY NO -- I DON'T HAVE TO GO...
SIMON, NO! YOU CAN'T -- CAN'T SHUT YOUR OWN LIFE DOWN FOR ME! YOU'VE GOT TO DO WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU, WHAT'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY...
THEY BOTH KNOW THIS WILL CHANGE THINGS ENORMOUSLY. THEIR RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN A PHYSICAL ONE, FULL OF CONTACT, OF PASSION, OF TOUCH.
THEY ARE COMFORTABLE TOGETHER, BUT NOT TALKERS, NOT WITH EACH OTHER. A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP... IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT.
BUT EVEN AS SHE BRINGS UP THE IDEA OF SEPARATION, SHE IS SURPRISED...
...SURPRISED IT DOESN'T BOTHER HER AS MUCH AS SHE THINKS IT SHOULD...
I CAN VISIT YOU, COME OUT TO L.A. UM... WHEN DO THEY WANT YOU THERE?
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I COULD FLY OUT DIRECT FROM HERE.
AND HE TOO WONDERS... WONDERS WHY THIS ISN'T HARDER.
I'LL... I'LL DO THAT, THEN...
AND AS ONE PAIR OF AVENGERS PONDER WHERE THEY'RE GOING...
LOCATION SIGNALS ARE WORKING JUST FINE...
WONDER MAN, SCARLET WITCH
STATUS: WEEKEND LEAVE
LOCATION: NEAR PHOENIX

...WE CAN PINPOINT ANY AVENGER WE *CHOOSE*, GETTING GOOD *DATA*, TOO...
...THE WIDOW'S GOT LEADS ON *TEMPEST*, AND THANKS TO JACK, WE'VE GOT MORE ON THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY* THAN...
LIVING LIGHTNING, PHOTON, QUASAR STATUS : MONITOR SQUAD LOCATION : ASTEROID BASE.
YOU'RE *DUCKING* THE SUBJECT, TONY.
BLACK WIDOW STATUS : SPECIAL MISSION LOCATION : YANQUAN
YOU GAVE YOUR *PERSONAL FORTUNE* TO THE MARIA STARK FOUNDATION, YOU'VE PRACTICALLY GONE INTO *SECLUSION*... WHAT'S GOING ON?
NOTHING TO *WORRY* ABOUT, JAN.
THE AVENGERS ARE *FULLY FUNDED*, AND *IRON MAN'S* STILL AN ACTIVE MEMBER -- SO IT DOESN'T *IMPACT* ON THE TEAM.
THAT'S NOT THE *POINT*...
THAT *IS* THE POINT, WASP. THE AVENGERS DON'T INTRUDE ON THEIR MEMBERS' *PERSONAL LIVES*, REMEMBER?
SO HERE'S *ANOTHER* BENEFIT OF THE NEW SYSTEM...
...WHO *KNEW*, WHEN WE ASKED THE BLACK KNIGHT AND FIREBIRD TO MONITOR *SLORENIA*, THAT THEY'D BE IN POSITION TO PICK UP TROUBLE IN *SIBERIA?*
THOR, QUICKSILVER, CAPTAIN AMERICA, FIREBIRD, BLACK KNIGHT, S.H.I.E.L.D. STATUS : ACTIVE LOCATION : NEAR SNEZHOGORSK
ALL WE HAD TO DO WAS *REINFORCE* THEM, AND *PRESTO!* -- INSTANT INVESTIGATION!
"I WONDER HOW THEY'RE *DOING*...?"
VISIBILITY DROPPING *FAST*...
SOME SORT OF *UNNATURAL HEAT* -- TURNING THE ICE AND SNOW TO *FOG*...
SWITCHING TO *V.R. SENSOR DISPLAY*...

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN RAISE ANYONE ON THE GROUND...
AVENGERS CALLING KHYSTYM TECHNICAL MISSION. COME IN, MISSION.
WE HAVE CLEARANCE TO APPROACH -- CODE-WORD "DARYONNY KON."
AVENGERS! THANKS GOD YOU HERE!
WE NOW EXPERIENCE INEXPLICABLE VOLNY IZLUCHENIYA... RADIATION SURGES. THE WINTER GUARD -- GONE IN NOW MANY HOURS --
-- BUT CONTACT LOST, WE DO NOT HEAR FROM THEM. NOW --
PFOOM
BOZHE MOI!!
VASILY! CHORT VOZ --
KHSSSSS
CUT OFF!
BUT WHAT--?
WHATEVER IT WAS, BLACK KNIGHT -- IT WASN'T GOOD! BREAK OUT THE RADIATION SUITS -- AND MEET THE REST OF US IN THE LANDING POD!
WE'VE GOT TO GET DOWN THERE --
-- FAST!

NEW YORK:
BLASTED BUREAUCRATS... THINK I'D'VE EARNED BETTER BY NOW...
...POLICY... FILES... FORMAL REQUESTS...
SIR? TRIATHLON? IS SOMETHING AMISS?
LUNCH WILL BE SERVED SOON...
SORRY, JARVIS -- I JUST SNACK WHEN I'M TORQUED OFF.
I'VE BEEN LOOKIN' INTO THIS WHOLE THING WHERE THAT OLD GUY WHO USED TO BE THE 3-D MAN DISAPPEARED --
-- RIGHT AROUND WHEN THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING STARTED UP --
-- AN' THEY WOUND UP GIVIN' ME POWERS ALMOST THE SAME AS HIS.
BUT I'M GETTING NOWHERE -- CAN'T GET ANY STRAIGHT ANSWERS.
IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE'S DUCKIN' ME, I THINK -- BUT IT'S JUST MAKIN' ME NUTS!
PERHAPS YOU MIGHT ASK THE AVENGERS FOR ASSISTANCE IN INVESTIGATING -- THE TEAM DOES AID ITS MEMBERS IN THIS SORT OF THING...
I DUNNO.
MAYBE IF I WAS SOMEONE ELSE, Y'KNOW?
BUT THE TEAM'S PRETTY TIGHT WITH EACH OTHER, AN' ME, I'M AN OUTSIDER.
I RUFFLED FEATHERS WHEN I JOINED, AN' I NEVER CLICKED WITH THE REST OF 'EM -- OH, MAYBE THE SHE-HULK, BUT SHE'S GONE.
NEVER MIND THAT THEY BEEN SURE THE TRIUNES ARE DIRTY FROM THE START, WHICH MAKES IT AWKWARD -- BUT I JUST DON'T FIT, Y'KNOW?
WHEN IT ALL SHAKES OUT, I'M GONNA WIND UP LIKE MANTIS, RAGE OR DEATHCRY...
...ONE OF THOSE AVENGERS YOU NEVER HEAR ABOUT...

IF YOU DON'T MIND THE SUGGESTION, SIR -- IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE A CONNECTION. PERHSPS IF YOU REACHED OUT...?
YEAH, MAYBE.
BUT I DON'T SEE IT HAPPENING. I'VE BEEN PLAYING THE GOOD SCOUT HERE, GIVING 110%, BUT --
BLANGLANGLA
WHAT--?
THE PRIORITY ALARM -- !
BLANGLANGLANGLANGLANGLANGLAN
HUH?
SUIT UP, TONY -- IT'S AN ALERT!
LOCATION DATA'S COMING IN NOW!
THE CRISIS POINT IS IDENTIFIED AS --

UNITED NATIONS PLAZA:
WHAT IN -- ?
JUST POPPED OUT OF
HEAR ME, PEOPLE OF THIS ERA!
I AM THE SCARLET CENTURION -- AND I HAVE COME TO YOU AS AN ENVOY, FROM ONE GREATER THAN SUCH AS YOU CAN EVER DREAM OF BECOMING!
MY LORD COMES TO ADDRESS YOUR LEADERS --
-- SO YOU MUST MAKE WAY -- MAKE WAY, AND PREPARE TO WELCOME HIM!
N-NOT A CHANCE, BUSTER!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU PULLED THAT STUNT, FRIEND -- BUT THERE'S NO WAY A STICK AND A FUNNY HAT ARE GETTING YOU INTO THE --
YOU DENY ME?
I ADVISE YOU TO CHANGE YOUR TUNE --
OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!
AND WE ADVISE YOU --

-- TO BACK OFF, RIGHT NOW -- OR FACE THE AVENGERS!
JUST CALM DOWN, PAL -- LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS.
THERE WAS A GUY IN A SUIT LIKE YOURS, A LONG TIME AGO -- BUT YOU SOUND TOO YOUNG TO BE HIM, SO...
BAH!
I WILL NOT BE DICTATED TO BY MY INFERIORS! YOU MAY BE THIS ERA'S MIGHTIEST CHAMPIONS, BUT YOU ARE NOTHING TO ME!
DO YOU HEAR ME?
NOTHING!
AVENGERS -- MOVE!

FAN OUT, EVERYONE! I'LL --
YOU WILL DO NOTHING, IRON MAN! NONE OF YOU WILL!
SMAKK
H-UHH!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE HEARD HOW DANGEROUS YOU ARE -- HOW CUNNING! BUT NOW --
-- NOW THAT I SEE YOU IN THE FLESH FOR THE FIRST TIME -- I AM NOT IMPRESSED! I WILL CRUSH YOU AND PRESENT YOU AS A GIFT TO MY LORD --
-- AS EASILY AS I DRAIN THE POWER FROM YOUR PRIMITIVE ARMOR!
WHATEVER HE'S JABBERING ABOUT -- HE'S GOT THE CHOPS TO BACK IT UP! HE'S QUICK -- STRONG ENOUGH THAT I CAN'T BREAK HIS GRIP --
-- AND HE'S EMPTYING MY STORAGE BATTERIES -- UNBELIEVABLY FAST!
MY MORE MODERN SUITS MIGHT BE ABLE TO RESIST IT, BUT THIS EARLY ONE JUST DOESN'T HAVE THE SHIELDING --
AARRH!
ALL HIS LIFE...?
K-RONG
VERY GOOD, GOLIATH.
DOWN, BOY!
LET HIM GO!
AND NOW THAT HE HAS RELEASED IRON MAN --

-- I SHALL END THIS BY --
BY REACHING INTO ME INTANGIBLY AND SOLIDIFYING PARTIALLY, DELIVERING A BIO-SHOCK THAT'LL STUN ME? I THINK NOT, VISION!
NOT WHILE MY ARMOR IS SUFFUSED WITH AN ENERGY-FIELD YOU CANNOT PASS THROUGH --
SWAKK
-- AND NOT WHILE MY STANDARD IS SIMILARLY CHARGED!
UHHH!
ENOUGH!
ZAK
ZAK
ZAK
ZAK
YOU'RE GOOD, "SCARLET CENTURION," BUT WE'VE GOT YOUR MEASURE NOW --
-- AND WE'RE THE AVENGERS!
I WANT A COORDINATED ASSAULT! GOLIATH, IMMOBILIZE HIM! TRIATHLON -- GET HIS WEAPON! IRON MAN --
I THINK YOU WILL FIND, MADAME WASP --

-- THAT I AM NOT SO EASILY DEFEATED AS THAT!
SPLOW
MAN -- HE IS GOOD! BETTER THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS KNOW, MAYBE!
IT'S NOT JUST POWER AND SPEED -- HIS MOVES ARE PRECISE, SHARP -- AN' HE DOESN'T HESITATE! THIS GUY'S BEEN TRAINED --
-- AND TRAINED BY THE BEST!
AND NOW --
HM?
AH-AH, RED -- DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!
EH?
SHAKK
YOU'RE PRETTY SMUG, PAL -- AND I GUESS YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT REASON!
BUT YOU SEEM AWFULLY FOND OF THAT OVERSIZED TOOTHPICK YOU'RE WAVING AROUND. SO LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS --

-- WHEN I ABSORB THE POWER CLEAN OUT OF IT!
YOU -- YOU DARE?!
BETTER BELIEVE IT, RED. WHEN IT COMES TO MY FRIENDS --
-- I DARE PLENTY!
YOU --
-- YOU --
-- YOU ARE MAGNIFICENT!
YOUR DEFIANCE, YOUR DETERMINATION -- YOUR BEAUTY -- I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE LIKE!
WH-WHAT--?
PERHAPS, WHEN HOSTILITIES ARE OVER, WE WILL BE ABLE TO MEET UNDER LESS FRACTIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES...
THAT -- THAT VOICE -- !
HM? WHY DO YOU -- MMPH!
GOTCHA, CENTURION!
GOTTA WATCH OUT FOR THOSE BIG BLUE EYES, GUY -- THEY'LL THROW YOU OFF YOUR GAME EVERY TIME!

YOU?
GHEEAAKHH!
A SURFACE CHARGE ON MY ARMOR WILL DEAL WITH YOU -- YOU ARE NOTHING. YOU CANNOT HOPE TO PREVAIL.
M-M-MAYBE NOT, P-PAL! B-BUT IT'S N-NEVER BEEN AB-ABOUT WHAT ONE G-GUY DOES -- BUT AB-ABOUT THE FI-FINAL SCORE!
WH-WHILE HE CAN'T S-SEE, AVENGERS -- G-G-GET HIM!
WE'RE ON IT! NICE WORK, TRIATHLON!
HUUUH!
HE WON'T BE USING THIS AGAIN...!
NO, WARBIRD --
-- HE WON'T!
KRONG
BUT AS THE AVENGERS MOVE TO SECURE THEIR FOE...
CEASE!
HM?
WHO -- ?

MY SON SEEMS TO HAVE... OVERSTEPPED HIS BOUNDS, AVENGERS. FORGIVE HIM.
KANG?!
YOUR... SON...?
NEVERTHELESS, HE DID COME ON A PEACEFUL MISSION, AS MY EMISSARY -- AND HE HAS BEEN TREATED ABOMINABLY.
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE.
WHATEVER YOU'RE AFTER, KANG --
-- WE'VE BEATEN YOU BEFORE, AND WE'LL DO IT AGAIN!
IT'S ALWAYS POSSIBLE, GOLIATH... THOUGH I DOUBT IT.
BUT THAT IS A MATTER FOR THE BATTLEFIELD. THIS WAS NO ATTACK --
-- AND THE RULES OF DIPLOMACY DO NOT PERMIT ENVOYS TO BE TREATED DISCOURTEOUSLY. YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE POWER YOU FACE, AVENGERS --
-- BUT YOU WILL LEARN.
DAMOCLES BASE -- A LESSON, PLEASE.
CHARGE MAIN BATTERIES --
"-- AND FIRE."

AND ONCE THE LIGHT AND SOUND HAS FADED...
OH, MY LORD...
THERE -- THERE MIGHT BE SURVIVORS! QUICKLY, AVENGERS --
-- LET'S MOVE!
PFF. SUCH AN UNDISCIPLINED GROUP...
YOU -- MONSTER!
I SWEAR TO YOU, KANG -- IN THE NAME OF THE GOOD MEN AND WOMEN YOU'VE JUST MURDERED --
SAVE YOUR OUTRAGE, WASP.
FOR AS YOU'LL SEE --
HUH?
WH--?

-- I HAVE KILLED NO ONE.
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN CRUSHING YOU -- THIS WAS MERELY A DEMONSTRATION, TO SHOW YOU THAT IF I NEED TO, I CAN DO IT EASILY.
THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DISCUSS, HOWEVER -- SUCH AS YOUR FUTURE, AND THAT OF THIS ENTIRE PLANET.
I HAVE SEEN WHAT IS IN STORE FOR YOU, AVENGERS -- AND THE WORLD AS YOU KNOW IT IS DOOMED -- DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION.
AND THE ONLY HOPE YOU HAVE, THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN SAVE YOU ALL --
-- STANDS BEFORE YOU NOW.
UH-OH. I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE THIS...!

SIBERIA. THE FORBIDDEN ZONE OF KHYSTYM.
IT BEGAN WITH A SUDDEN, GARGANTUAN SPIKE OF RADIOACTIVITY. AN AD HOC SQUAD OF AVENGERS WAS FORMED TO INVESTIGATE...
WHAT... MANNER OF PLACE IS THIS?
IT IS NOW SEVEN HOURS THAT OUR NATIONAL SUPER-TEAM, "ZIMNIY STOROZH" -- THE WINTER GUARD -- ARE GOING IN TO SEARCH FOR ANSWERS.
HAS THERE BEEN ANY WORD FROM THEM?
NOT SINCE SHORTLY BEFORE YOU ARRIVE, KAPITAN AMERIKAH.
THIS IS LAST TRANSMISSION WE RECEIVE FROM THEM...
CHTO-TO UDARILO ISSLEDOVATEL'SKUYU STANTZIYU. YEST OZHOGI, VRYEDY, ZABROSHENNOYE ORUHIYE, A TRUPOV NYET.
KAZHETSA, VSYO PROSTO... ISCHESLO.
WHAT DID HE SAY?
HE SAID THE RESEARCH STATION IS ABANDONED. SIGNS OF VIOLENCE, BUT NO BODIES.
YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN, QUICKSILVER?
DOESN'T EVERYONE?
WE WILL GO ON NOW, TECHNICIAN STOYKOV. BUT YOU GO BACK -- IT IS NOT SAFE TO --
PFOOM
KAM KAM
ZOKK
EH?
THAT MUST BE THEM! SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE A MILE OR TWO OFF --
-- AND WHATEVER THEY'RE UP AGAINST, IT'S BIG!
MOVE, AVENGERS -- MOVE!

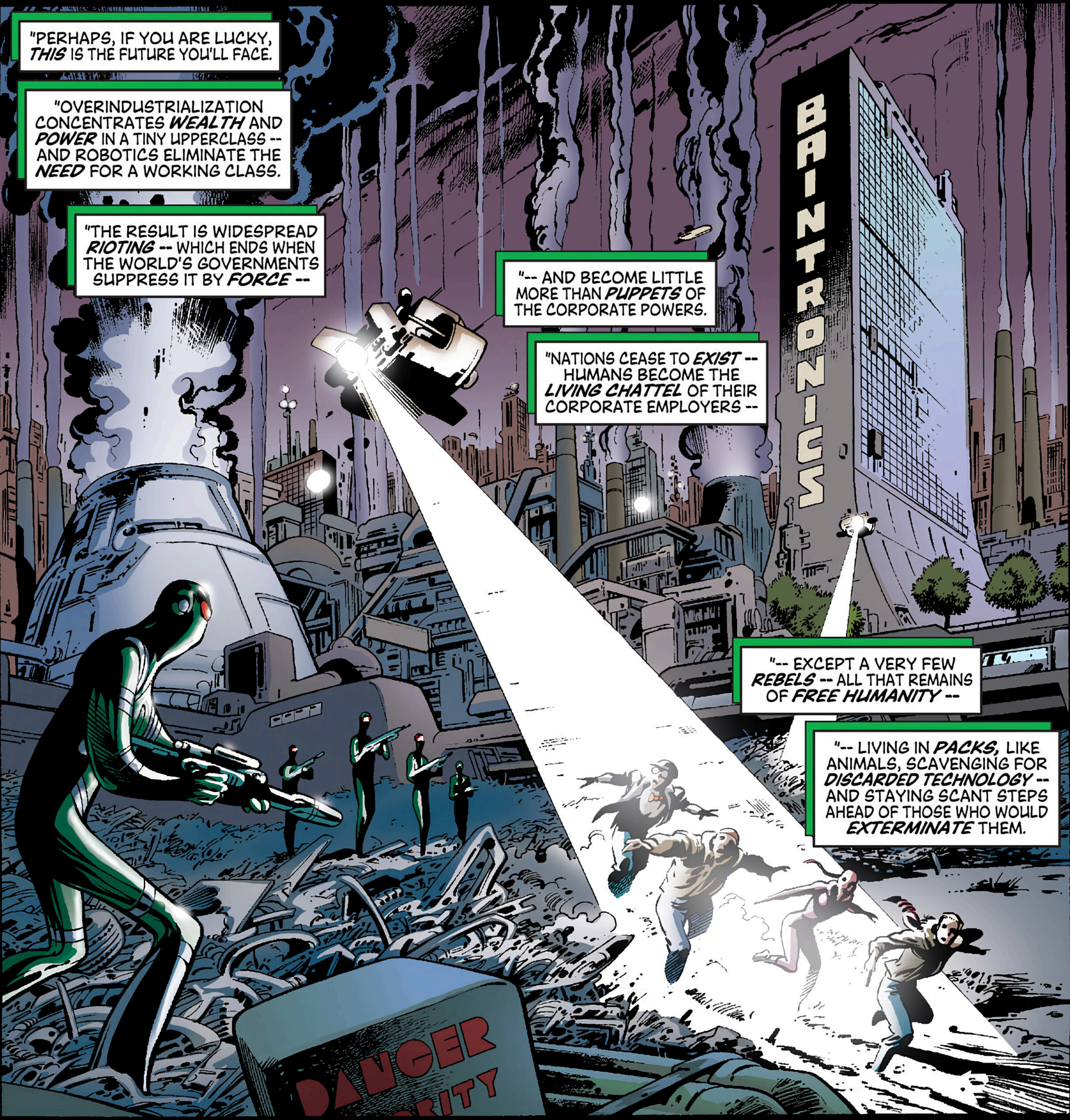
MANHATTAN, UNITED NATIONS PLAZA.
AIRSHRIKE-1 TO AIRSHRIKE-2. PRIORITY SWEEP. ALL CANNONS ARMED.
AIRSHRIKE-2, ACKNOWLEDGING.
ONLY MINUTES AGO, THE UNITED NATIONS BUILDING WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED, BY A BEAM FROM SPACE --
EVERYBODY MAINTAIN POSITION! FULL READINESS -- I REPEAT, FULL READINESS! FINGERS ON TRIGGERS AND EYES ON THE PRIZE!
DESTROYED, HOWEVER --
AND COMM-SQUAD -- GET A SIGNAL THROUGH THAT FORCE-FIELD!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE -- NOW!
-- WITHOUT ANY LOSS OF LIFE. ALL OF THE U.N. AMBASSADORS PRESENT WERE PROTECTED, ALONG WITH THEIR STAFFS, THE REST OF THE BUILDING'S OCCUPANTS --
-- AND THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!
STAY ALERT, TEAM. WE WANT TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING...
THE BLAST THAT DESTROYED THE U.N. CAME FROM HERE --
-- THE ORBITAL STATION CODE-NAMED DAMOCLES BASE. IT IS SHIELDED FROM DETECTION --
-- AND UNDER THE COMPLETE COMMAND OF ONE MAN.
SILENCE, EVERYONE! CEASE YOUR WHIMPERING --
-- AND ATTEND THE WORDS OF KANG, THE CONQUEROR.
I THINK THAT'LL BE ENOUGH, SCARLET CENTURION. WE HAVE THEIR ATTENTION.
AND STAND DOWN, AVENGERS. I AM NOT HERE TO DESTROY YOU, NOT TODAY -- OR YOU WOULD ALREADY BE DEAD.
I HAVE COME TO TALK.
SO TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO MY OMNI-SCREEN, AS I REVEAL TO YOU --

"-- YOUR FUTURE."
JOIN
NO MORE TOMORROWS
KURT BUSIEK WRITER ALAN DAVIS PENCILER MARK FARMER INKER
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S JASON LEVINE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

"AND HOW WILL THIS FUTURE COME ABOUT?
"THEY COME OUT OF THE EAST, AND BY THE TIME ANY CREDIBLE RESISTANCE IS MOUNTED, THEIR NUMBERS ARE TOO GREAT TO WITHSTAND.
"THEY ARE LIVING DEATH -- RADIOACTIVE SOLDIERS DIRECTED BY A SINGLE COMMUNAL MIND. THEY BURST WITH POWER --
"-- AND THEIR VERY TOUCH IS POISONOUS. IT CONVERTS THEIR VICTIMS TO MORE LIKE THEM.
"WHAT RESISTANCE THE WORLD CAN OFFER DOES NOT LAST LONG.
"OH, SOME HUMANS SURVIVE, TO BE SURE.
"BUT THE AIR IS POISONED, AS IS THE WATER -- AND EVEN THOSE WHO ESCAPE CAPTURE --
"-- CAN DO NOTHING, IN THE END --
"-- BUT SUCCUMB.

"AND THE TRANSFORMED -- THEY JOIN THEIR BROTHERS --
"-- LINKING, COMMUNING MIND TO MIND -- BECOMING NO MORE THAN A SINGLE ATOM OF A GREAT LATTICE THAT SURROUNDS THE WORLD.
"THEIR THOUGHTS ARE COOL AND SUBMERGED -- THEIR IDENTITY GONE.
"NO MORE DO THEY BREED, FIGHT, OR STRIVE FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN COMMUNION.
"HUMANITY -- AT LEAST AS WE KNOW IT --
"-- IS DEAD."

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS FATE CAN BE *AVOIDED -- POSSIBLE,* IF UNLIKELY.
BUT EVEN IF HUMANITY SURVIVES *THIS* THREAT --
-- WILL YOU BE PREPARED FOR WHAT *ELSE* LURKS JUST BEYOND THE HORIZON? WHAT YOU HAVE NO *DEFENSE* AGAINST --
-- BECAUSE YOU DO NOT EVEN KNOW IT'S *THERE?*
Y-YES, COLONEL -- YES, I *HEAR* YOU...


"PERHAPS, IF YOU ARE LUCKY, *THIS* IS THE FUTURE YOU'LL FACE.
"OVERINDUSTRIALIZATION CONCENTRATES *WEALTH* AND *POWER* IN A TINY UPPERCLASS -- AND ROBOTICS ELIMINATE THE *NEED* FOR A WORKING CLASS.
"THE RESULT IS WIDESPREAD *RIOTING* -- WHICH ENDS WHEN THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS SUPPRESS IT BY *FORCE* --
"-- AND BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN *PUPPETS* OF THE CORPORATE POWERS.
"NATIONS CEASE TO *EXIST* -- HUMANS BECOME THE *LIVING CHATTEL* OF THEIR CORPORATE EMPLOYERS --
BRAINTRONICS
"-- EXCEPT A VERY FEW *REBELS* -- ALL THAT REMAINS OF *FREE HUMANITY* --
"-- LIVING IN *PACKS,* LIKE ANIMALS, SCAVENGING FOR *DISCARDED TECHNOLOGY* -- AND STAYING SCANT STEPS AHEAD OF THOSE WHO WOULD *EXTERMINATE* THEM.
DANGER

"NO? YOU THINK YOU CAN AVOID THAT FATE?
"CAN YOU AVOID THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MOON AT THE HANDS OF A REBELLIOUS COLONY, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IT WREAKS?
"A GLOBAL WINTER -- CIVILIZATION SHATTERED --
"-- AND THE REMNANTS OF IT LOCKED IN CONSTANT, UNCEASING WAR?

"CAN YOU AVOID INVASION FROM SPACE -- THE SUBJUGATION OF THE WORLD BY A FLEET STAGING FROM THE PLANET MARS?
"THE POPULATION DECIMATED -- REDUCED TO A DWINDLING BAND OF REFUGEES FIGHTING FOR A FREEDOM THEY CANNOT HOPE TO WIN?

"THE THREATS THAT WILL COME ARE MANY AND VARIED.
"FROM THE DREADED NORSE RAGNAROK --
"-- TO THE RISE OF THE ELDER GOD CHTHON AND THE UNSPEAKABLE INFECTION HE BRINGS --
"-- TO THE SUN FLARING UP, BOILING AWAY EARTH'S SEAS --
"-- TO THE ENSLAVEMENT OF HUMANITY AT THE HANDS OF HOMO SAPIENS SUPERIOR -- THE MUTANTS AMONG YOU.

"THE END COULD COME FROM SPACE --
"-- AS RETRIBUTION FOR THE ACTS OF A FEW OF YOUR 'SUPER HEROES' --
"-- AS SIMPLE GREED FOR POWER AND TERRITORY --
"-- OR FOR REASONS FAR MORE MYSTIFYING.
"THE END COULD COME FROM WITHIN -- AS YOUR OWN SCIENCE TURNS TO WORLDWIDE HORROR --
"--AS YOU ARE SUPPLANTED BY YOUR OWN CREATIONS --
"-- AS THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR BY THE BRINKMANSHIP OF ONE NATION DEFENDING ITSELF.
SHUT HIM DOWN
SHUT HIM DOWN
"IT COULD BE CATASTROPHE ON A COSMIC SCALE, TRIGGERED BY A FAULTY COMPUTER CIRCUIT --
"-- AS TWIN EARTHS IN THE SAME ORBIT COLLIDE."
IT COULD BE ANY OF THESE -- OR A THOUSAND THOUSAND MORE.
AND MARK MY WORDS, MEN OF THIS CENTURY. THESE ARE NOT AIRY PROJECTIONS, INVENTED WORST-CASE SCENARIA.
I AM A TIME-TRAVELER.

I HAVE SEEN THEM ALL WITH MY OWN TWO EYES.
WE MUST ACT, AVENGERS -- AND SWIFTLY.
YEAH -- MAYBE IF WE TAKE HIM OUT FAST ENOUGH, WE CAN CUT HIM OFF FROM HIS --
CEASE, AVENGERS. I DO NOT WISH FURTHER COMBAT --
-- BUT IF YOU MAKE A HOSTILE MOVE, I SHALL BE FORCED TO BEGIN KILLING AMBASSADORS...
YEAH? WELL, WHAT IF WE PUT YOU DOWN FIRST, YOU MISERABLE BLUE-FACED --
HOLD IT!
NOBODY DOES ANYTHING -- NOT YET. THIS IS KANG'S GAME, AT LEAST FOR NOW. LET'S HEAR HIM OUT.
MY THANKS, MADAME WASP.
I REGRET THE NECESSITY FOR THIS. PERHAPS IT WILL BE OVER SOON --
-- AND THERE WILL BE PEACE BETWEEN US.
I WOULD LIKE THAT... I THINK.
WHAT IS IT, WARBIRD? WHY DOES THE SCARLET CENTURION AFFECT YOU SO STRANGELY?
HIS -- HIS VOICE, VISION -- HIS EYES, HIS STANCE. HE'S...
...HE'S MARCUS...!

YES, HUMANITY FACES A TREACHEROUS PATH INDEED. THE TIME TO COME WILL BE HARSH --
-- AND YOUR ONLY HOPE IS A MAN WHO HAS SEEN THE MYRIAD FUTURES --
-- WHO CAN GUIDE YOU THROUGH THEIR TREACHEROUS EDDIES AND BYWAYS --
-- GUIDE YOU FROM THIS, MANKIND'S BIRTHPLACE --
-- TO A GLORIOUS DESTINY IN THE STARS --!
THAT IS ENOUGH, KANG! YOU HAVE ATTACKED US, DESTROYED OUR MEETING PLACE, HELD US HERE BY THREAT OF VIOLENCE --
-- AND NOW YOU OFFER YOUR HELP?
TRACKING -- TRIANGULATING --
-- LOCKED!
WE HAVE BEEN IN COMMUNICATION WITH MILITARY FORCES OUTSIDE -- AND ONLY LET YOU KEEP TALKING AS LONG AS WE DID --
-- SO THAT WE COULD USE THE TIME TO BREAK YOUR CLOAKING TECHNOLOGY AND FIND YOUR ORBITAL BASE!
YOUR OFFER, SIR --
FIRE! FIRE!

"-- IS REJECTED!"
THE SKY LIGHTS UP IN A BRILLIANT, INTENSE FLARE OF POWER --
-- A FLARE THAT IS ECHOED ON THE OMNI-SCREEN WITHIN THE FORCE-FIELD BELOW. IT BUILDS -- BLINDING, PURE -- AND WHEN IT FADES --
I APOLOGIZE FOR THE DECEPTION, MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL.
I ALLOWED YOU TO CONTACT YOUR PEOPLE. ALLOWED YOU TO FIND DAMOCLES BASE. FOR AS YOU SEE --
-- I AM QUITE ABLE TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM YOUR BACKWARD TECHNOLOGY.
AND YOU MISUNDERSTOOD MY PURPOSE HERE, I FEAR. THIS IS NOT AN OFFER OF ASSISTANCE --
-- BUT A DECLARATION OF WAR.
I INTEND TO CONQUER EARTH IN ORDER TO SAVE IT.
I WILL, OF COURSE, EXTEND TO YOU ALL THE OPPORTUNITY TO SURRENDER, BUT I KNOW YOU WON'T TAKE IT.
SO INSTEAD --
-- LET ME TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU.

"MY LEGIONS HAVE BEEN UNDEFEATED ON A THOUSAND WORLDS AND MORE, ACROSS BOTH SPACE AND TIME.
"WE WILL TAKE FRANCE AND GERMANY FIRST -- AMERICA BEING READILY DEPENDABLE TO ARGUE INTERNALLY AND FAIL TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION --
"-- AND SPREAD OUT FROM OUR BEACHHEAD THERE.
"EUROPE SHOULD FALL WITHIN THREE WEEKS. MY MOST CHARITABLE PROJECTIONS GIVE HER TWENTY-SIX DAYS.
"AFTER THAT --
"-- THE REST OF THE WORLD WILL FOLLOW JUST AS EASILY.

"YOUR SO-CALLED 'HEROES' WILL UNDERGO THE REEDUCATION THAT WILL MAKE THEM LOYAL SOLDIERS...
"THE REST OF THE WORLD'S ABLE-BODIED POPULATION WILL BE CONSCRIPTED --
"-- AND ASSIGNED TO THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACES, WHETHER IT BE MILITARY SERVICE OR ANOTHER FUNCTION IN THE NEW ORDER.
"GENETIC SCANNING WILL ISOLATE THE FINEST OF HUMAN STOCK --
"-- SO THAT ONLY THE BEST WILL PASS ON THEIR GENES, CREATING A STRONGER, TOUGHER, MORE CAPABLE HUMANITY.
"THE EARTH WILL HAVE PURPOSE -- NOBLE, GLORIOUS PURPOSE --
"-- AS GREAT ARMAMENTS ARE BUILT, DEFENSES AGAINST THE THREATS TO COME.
"COLONY SHIPS WILL BE SENT -- MANIFEST DESTINY AWAKENED, AS HUMANITY --"
YOU WILL NEVER SUCCEED. THE WORLD WILL UNITE AGAINST YOU.
WILL IT, MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL?

THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS WILL UNITE AGAINST ME, YES. BUT THE PEOPLE?
THAT MAY BE ANOTHER MATTER. WHAT DO THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS OFFER, AFTER ALL, BUT UNCERTAINTY -- AND THE POSSIBILITY OF WORLDWIDE CALAMITY?
WHILE, I, ON THE OTHER HAND, OFFER SECURITY AND PROTECTION -- AN IRON HAND, YES, BUT A SURE HAND -- A PROMISE THAT EARTH'S CHILDREN WILL SURVIVE --
-- AND BECOME A GLORIOUS, STAR-SPANNING EMPIRE!
YES, I KNOW THAT EARTH'S GOVERNMENTS DO NOT WISH TO BE REPLACED -- AND WOULD NOT WISH THEIR PEOPLE TO HEAR WHAT I OFFER --
-- BUT IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE. THE MOMENT I OPENED THIS... DISCUSSION...
...I PLACED FULL DETAILS ON YOUR GLOBAL INTERNET FOR ALL TO SEE...
...AND HAVE BROADCAST MY ADDRESS ON EVERY TELEVISION AND RADIO IN THE WORLD, ALWAYS IN THE LOCAL MAJORITY LANGUAGE.
THE PEOPLE KNOW, SIR... AND CAN CHOOSE FREELY.
TALK ALL YOU WISH! THE WORLD WILL FIGHT!
AND WE WILL FIND A WAY TO DRIVE YOU OFF -- THE AVENGERS WILL, OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR --
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE COMING COMBAT, SIR. VERY MUCH.
BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW -- THERE IS ANOTHER OFFER I HAVE MADE TO THE WORLD.
ANYONE WHO RISES UP AGAINST THEIR PRESENT MASTERS, WHO TAKES CONTROL OF A PART OF THE WORLD'S INHABITABLE SURFACE AND SWEARS FEALTY TO ME --
-- THEY SHALL HAVE A PLACE IN THE NEW ORDER.
THAT OFFER, TOO, WAS MADE PUBLIC WHEN I BEGAN SPEAKING. AND NOW I AM ALLOWING FULL RADIO COMMUNICATION INTO THIS FORCE-FIELD.
PERHAPS YOU WISH TO DISCOVER WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE...

THE -- THE REPORTS --
THEY CAN'T BE TRUE -- THEY CAN'T BE --!
BUT THEY ARE. AND EVEN AS HE DENIES IT, IRON MAN KNOWS HE'S WRONG.
ROLLO BAY, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.
A PLATOON OF ARMORED ATLANTEANS SURGES OUT OF THE PEACEFUL WATERS --
-- LED BY A COMMANDER WHO, FROM THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN, CAN BE NONE OTHER THAN ATTUMA, BARBARIAN USURPER OF ATLANTIS.
WUWEI, CHINA.
THE GROUND FALLS AWAY, AND INVADERS BOIL FORTH --
-- MONSTROUS HUMANOID INVADERS WHO CAN ONLY BE OF THE HIDDEN RACE KNOWN AS THE DEVIANTS.
AND THE REPORTS DON'T STOP THERE. RIOTING, LOOTING, ARMED INSURRECTIONS --
-- MILITIAS, SUPER-VILLAINS, EVEN RENEGADE MILITARY CADRES -- ALMOST AS IF THEY'D BEEN AWAITING A SIGNAL, AWAITING ONLY THE LIGHTING OF A FUSE --
IT -- IT IS TOO MUCH --!
AND STILL THE REPORTS COME.

AND THERE YOU HAVE IT. THE WAR IS WELL UNDER WAY -- AND MY ARMIES HAVE YET TO FIRE A SHOT. I EXPECT YOU'LL BE BUSY FOR SOME TIME --
-- SO I WILL TAKE MY LEAVE NOW, TO MAKE MY OWN PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMING INVASION OF EUROPE.
BUT UNDERSTAND THIS...
ANY ATTEMPT TO STRIKE AT ME -- OR MY SON, THE SCARLET CENTURION -- AS WE DEPART, WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE REPRISALS FROM DAMOCLES BASE --
-- AND THIS TIME, THERE WILL BE NO MERCY.
VERY WELL. FORCE-FIELD --
"-- DISSOLVE!"
THERE IS A COLLECTIVE INTAKE OF BREATH, AND THE IRREGULAR RATTLE OF A THOUSAND WEAPONS COMING TO BEAR --
-- BUT --
IN POSITION, SIR, AND AWAITING THE ORDER. SIR? SIR?
...
UNDERSTOOD, SIR.
HOLD YOUR FIRE, MEN. REPEAT -- DO NOT FIRE. DO NOT FIRE.
HOW GOOD THAT YOU UNDERSTAND.
OH, AND THAT FUTURE THREAT I WARNED YOU OF, AT THE VERY BEGINNING?

LOOK TO THE EAST, AVENGERS --
"-- BECAUSE IT HAS ALREADY BEGUN!"
KHYSTYM, SIBERIA.
THIS IS THE PLACE, CAPTAIN AMERICA. THE SOUNDS WE DID HEAR CAME FROM HERE -- I AM CERTAIN OF IT.
AND YET -- THERE'S NOBODY LEFT HERE, THOR. QUICKSILVER, ANY SIGNS OF BATTLE?
HOW COULD ONE TELL, CAP?
THE LANDSCAPE IS ALREADY SO FREAKISH, SO SCARRED, THAT --!
WAIT! THAT SOUND!
THERE'S SOMEONE ALIVE --
-- HERE!
PO -- POMOGITE MNYEH --!
DARKSTAR! THEN THE WINTER GUARD WAS HERE...!
VERNULSYA ON...
HE -- HE HAS RETURNED, CAPTAIN AMERICA! RETURNED -- AND TAKEN THEM ALL...
WHO, DARKSTAR?
WHO HAS RETURNED?

ZOUNDS!
AVENGERS -- LOOK!
THAT FIGURE, BLACK KNIGHT! I RECOGNIZE IT, FROM THE AVENGERS FILES! IT IS --
"-- THE PRESENCE!"
YES... YES, IT IS I...
AND I BRING WITH ME A NEW DAWN... AND THE BLESSING OF A NEW KIND OF LIFE...!
A BLESSING I WILL SHARE... WITH THE ENTIRE WORLD...!

MOSCOW. THE KREMLIN. MANY MONTHS AGO.
<WE MUST BE SWIFT, SERGEI. WE STILL CANNOT STAY IN INHABITED AREAS LONG WITHOUT CONTAMINATING THEM.
<AND WE HAVE COME TO THIS CHAMBER OFTEN.>
<YES, YES. WE CANNOT ALARM THEM, CANNOT CAUSE THEM WORRY. WE BROUGHT THEM THE BODY OF MY SON -- OF MY SON --
<-- BUT STILL THEY FEAR US, AND WE MUST REMAIN QUANTUM-SHIFTED, THAT THEY MAY NOT SEE OR HEAR US. AND WE CAN ONLY SNATCH MOMENTS WITH HIM.
<OH, MIKHAIL, MY SON...!>
<THEY HONOR HIM, SERGEI. AS A HERO OF THE MOTHERLAND.>
<A HERO. PAH! A DEAD HERO!
<I SACRIFICED MY HUMANITY FOR POWER, TANIA. FOR POWER -- AND I RECEIVED IT. BUT IT IS A POWER THAT CUTS ME OFF FROM MY HOMELAND, MY PEOPLE -- FROM EVERYONE BUT YOU.
<AND FOR ALL THAT COST -- ALL THIS GREAT POWER -- I CANNOT PREVENT MY COUNTRY'S CRASHING FROM GREATNESS INTO CHAOS, DISSOLUTION AND RUIN.
<CANNOT EVEN SAVE MY OWN SON.>
THE UNMOVING FORM IN THE PRESERVATION CHAMBER IS VANGUARD -- THE LATE RUSSIAN MUTANT SUPER HERO.
THE SPEAKERS ARE SERGEI KRYLOV -- THE PRESENCE -- AND HIS COMPANION AND MATE, TANIA BELINSKY -- STARLIGHT. IN ALL OF RUSSIA, THERE ARE NONE MORE POWERFUL --

-- OR MORE FEARED.
<IT IS NOT ENOUGH. I HAVE POWER -- AM POWER -- AND I SHALL ACT!>
<SERGEI! THE GUARDS HERE ARE INNOCENTS! IF YOU UNLEASH YOUR POWER -- !>
<SILENCE, WOMAN.
<I AM NOT ABOUT TO GO ON SOME MAD RAMPAGE -- DO NOT FEAR THAT.
<RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN ZONE, WHERE THEY LET US LIVE IN ISOLATION. RETURN, WHILE I ALTER MY PHYSICAL STATE ONCE MORE --
<-- AND SEEK TRUTH!>
From the Journals of Sergei Krylov:
Energy controls matter -- and my control is thus considerable. I shifted my atoms, becoming intangible, microscopic --
-- and I entered the body of my son.
The government kept his corpse preserved in gasses of my own design, and they -- and I -- thought that prevented decay.
But as I plunged deep within his atomic structure, into the space between atoms, I discovered --
-- that this was not so.
My son's power gave him certain controls over energy as well -- and on an infinitesimal level, faint and undetectable from outside --
-- a trace of that energy remained, and kept him alive -- a faint spark of life glowing weakly at his core.

I added my power to his, giving it willingly, gladly --
-- and though it took virtually all the vast fires within me, I drained myself, giving him the energies of my heart, my soul.
And that spark flickered -- flashed --
BOZHE MOI!
KOMANDIR! KOMANDIR, BUISTRO! ON ZHIV!
CH-CHTO?!
GDYE -- GDYE YA-- ?!
-- and flared to life once more.
I was exhausted, spent -- adrift at this subatomic level of reality --
-- and it would be months, if not longer, before I would be able to return to the greater realm.
I drifted, regaining my strength --
-- and I studied. And I learned.
I saw how the energy that permeates matter -- the energy of life itself -- functions and harmonizes, replicates and glows.
And I made a wondrous discovery --

KHYSTYM, SIBERIA. THE FORBIDDEN ZONE. DAYS AGO.
<I HAVE RETURNED! AND WITH ME, I BRING -- SALVATION!>
<SERGEI -- PRESENCE!
<YOU -- YOU LIVE! I HAD THOUGHT...!>
<YES, YES -- BUT THAT IS NOT IMPORTANT, NOT NOW!
<LISTEN! OUR NATION AND ITS FORMER DOMINIONS FACE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE -- BUT WORSE, THEY FACE CULTURAL POLLUTION FROM THE WEST --
<-- AS OUTSIDE FORCES SEEK TO PROFIT FROM REBUILDING RUSSIA, SEEK TO CHANGE HER PEOPLE, HER VERY NATURE!
<BUT I SAVED MY SON -- AND MY DISCOVERY WILL SAVE RUSSIA AS WELL!>
<BUT SURELY SOME LEVEL OF ASSIMILATION IS INEVITABLE --
<-- AS PEOPLE LEAVE -- AS OUTSIDERS COME IN -->
<NO!
<I CAN CHANGE RUSSIA'S PEOPLE -- MAKE THEM A NEW FORM OF LIFE, A NUCLEAR FORM! SOMETHING YOU AND I CAN BE PART OF ONCE MORE!
<OUR PEOPLE WILL BE BOUND TOGETHER -- SHARING STRENGTH, SHARING LIFE! THEY WILL NEED ONLY EACH OTHER, AND REPEL ALL EFFORTS TO CHANGE THEM --
<-- WILL BE FREE OF ALL POISON, WHETHER IT COMES IN THE FORM OF FORCE OR OF CREEPING ECONOMICS!
<RUSSIA WILL BE A NEW LAND, STANDING ALONE AND STRONG! WE WILL BE POWERFUL ONCE AGAIN! POWERFUL, PROUD, UNITED! AND IT BEGINS --
<--NOW!>
I returned -- and heralded the salvation of my homeland with a beacon of radioactive fire that could be sensed for countless leagues...

KHYSTYM, TODAY.
STRIKE, AVENGERS! STRIKE HARD -- AND SURE!
WE MUST FORCE THESE UNNATURAL CREATURES BACK, LEST THEY OVERWHELM US -- AND AFTER US, THE WORLD!
THOR!
THEY'RE SURROUNDING US -- BOXING ME IN -- !
GLOBAL PRESENCE
KURT BUSIEK WRITER ALAN DAVIS PENCILER MARK FARMER INKER
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

IT WAS ONLY HOURS AGO --
QUICKSILVER!
I HAVE YOU, FIREBIRD! BUT THIS BATTLE -- WE'RE ACCOMPLISHING NOTHING!
CAPTAIN AMERICA! THE ONLY WAY TO STOP THESE RADIOACTIVE FREAKS IS AT THE SOURCE, BY GETTING TO THE PRESENCE!
-- THAT THE TIME TRAVELING KANG THE CONQUEROR ADDRESSED THE U.N., AND SPOKE OF DANGEROUS FUTURES, OF THREATS HE'D WITNESSED.
HE SPOKE OF A MENACE FROM THE EAST --
BUT WE CAN'T GET THROUGH THEM IF WE CAN'T FIGHT THEM --
-- AND THEY'RE SOAKING UP THOR AND FIREBIRD'S POWER LIKE IT'S A COOL DRINK!
THERE MUST BE ANTI-RADIATION FOAM BACK AT THE SENTRY STATIONS ON THE BORDERS OF THIS HELLISH PLACE -- MAYBE THAT WILL HAVE AN EFFECT!
-- A MENACE WHOSE VERY TOUCH WOULD BE POISONOUS -- WOULD TRANSFORM OTHERS INTO BEINGS LIKE THEM.
HE SAID THAT IF UNCHECKED, THIS THREAT OR OTHERS WOULD END HUMANITY -- AND ONLY HE COULD GUIDE THE WORLD THROUGH THE DANGERS TO COME.
GOOD THINKING, PIETRO! GO!
AYE -- QUICKSILVER'S TIME IN THE INHUMANS' MILITIA HATH SERVED HIM WELL. HE THINKS LIKE A LEADER OF MEN.
AND AS THESE AVENGERS BATTLE WHAT WAS ONCE THE SCIENTISTS, SOLDIERS AND SUPER HEROES WHO INVESTIGATED THE FORBIDDEN ZONE --
YES, I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT TACTICS, THOR...
...IN THE TIME I WAS BECOMING A FAILURE AS A HUSBAND AND A MAN...
-- IT APPEARS THAT KANG MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT...
BLACK KNIGHT! INCOMING -- TWO O'CLOCK!

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, CANADA.
CHOOM
RAK
ATTAT
HRKAYRRRR!
BUT THAT WASN'T ALL KANG SAID.
HE ALSO ANNOUNCED HE WOULD CONQUER THE WORLD IN ORDER TO SAVE IT -- AND THAT ANYONE WHO SEIZED TERRITORY IN HIS NAME WOULD HAVE A PLACE IN THE NEW ORDER.
JACK OF HEARTS! WANDA! CONCENTRATE ON THE MONSTER -- HE'S THE KEY TO DRIVING THE INVADERS BACK!
TRIATHLON -- YOU AND I WILL FOCUS ON THE TROOPS!
FINE BY ME, WASP -- THESE BUBBLE-HEADS ARE MORE MY SPEED, ANYWAY!
AMONG THOSE WHO TOOK KANG UP ON HIS OFFER --
-- WAS ATTUMA, THE USURPER WARLORD OF ATLANTIS.
THIS GUY'S NO SLOUCH, SCARLET WITCH! AND IF I REALLY OPEN UP --
-- IT COULD ENDANGER THE CANADIAN TROOPS!
FALL BACK, THEN -- LET ME TRY TO REACH HIS MIND! MAYBE I CAN PUT HIM TO --
RAHH!
SWOT
-- AAH!
KSSH
BLAST IT -- WHERE'S HANK?!
WE COULD REALLY USE THE STRENGTH OF GOLIATH RIGHT ABOUT --

HEEEEEERRE I COME TO SAVE THE DAAAAY--!
HANK--?
HUH?
YELLOW-JACKET?!
SAVE YOUR CHEERS FOR LATER, GALS -- 'CAUSE I'M ABOUT TO WRAP THIS UP, WITH A DOSE OF HANDY-DANDY, ONE-OF-A-KIND --
RRUH?
-- BIO-DISRUPTOR BLASTS!
BZZATT
WHAKK
RRAH!
UHH!
OKAY, OKAY -- LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA TAKE MORE THAN ONE SHOT -- !
AND, AS THE BATTLE RAGES...
TORG FIGHTS WELL, SERESTUS. HOW GOOD THAT WE FOUND HIM IN THE FROZEN NORTH --
-- AND THE CONTROL PEARL THAT KEEPS HIM A MINDLESS SLAVE.
HAH! THE AVENGERS SHOULD HAVE COME IN GREATER NUMBERS, EH?
THEN WE COULD HAVE CRUSHED MORE OF THEM!
P-PLEASE, LORD ATTUMA -- !
THIS IS -- DIFFICULT -- AND I MUST CONCENTRATE -- !

WUWEI, CHINA.
ANOTHER BID FOR TERRITORY --
SSSSSSSS
KRAKT
HEY, FELLAS!
HOPE YOU CAN GET A REFUND FROM WHOEVER SOLD YOU THESE BIG OL' ROBO-TANKS --
-- 'CAUSE BABY, THIS ONE IS TOAST!
AAAAAHH
-- THIS ONE AT THE HANDS OF THE HIDDEN OFFSHOOT OF HUMANITY KNOWN AS THE DEVIANTS.
FALL BACK! FALL BACK!
WE MUST REGROUP! BUT WE SHALL STILL KNOW TRIUMPH IN THIS BATTLE! THE DEVIANTS KNOW NO FEAR -- AND WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED!
SURE, SURE.
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SCUTTLING BACK UNDERGROUND LIKE ROACHES, RIGHT?
PAM PAM PAM
HERE, LET ME HELP YOU ALONG -- !
AND SOON...
OKAY, THAT'S THAT -- FOR NOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHY THERE ARE DEVIANTS IN CHINA, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO GO IN AFTER THEM, ONCE WE'VE CAUGHT OUR BREATH.
BLACK WIDOW, CAN YOU TELL THE CHINESE TROOPS WHAT WE'RE UP TO -- COORDINATE WITH THEM? MY CHINESE IS A LITTLE RUSTY...
OF COURSE, WARBIRD.

WARBIRD -- HOW ARE YOU DOING?
I THINK WE'RE DOING FINE, VISION.
THIS SQUAD HASN'T HAD MUCH EXPERIENCE WORKING TOGETHER, BUT I'M GLAD SILVERCLAW, THE SHE-HULK AND THE WIDOW WERE AVAILABLE --
-- AND WE'VE GOT THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL FOR THE MOMENT, WE'VE GOT AN ATTACK PLAN...
THAT IS... NOT WHAT I MEANT, CAROL.
YOU HAVE FOCUSED ON THE MISSION SINCE WE LEFT NEW YORK, ALLOWING NOTHING ELSE TO ENTER YOUR MIND. I THINK THAT IS A REACTION --
-- TO THE UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE OF THE SCARLET CENTURION. THAT MUST BE... TROUBLING...
VISION, YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND -- AND IT'S NICE TO HAVE THE SUPPORT, TO KNOW SOMEONE CARES.
BUT I'M FINE.
I WAS JUST A LITTLE SHOCKED. IT'S NOTHING, REALLY. IT'S...
I REGRET THE NECESSITY FOR THIS. PERHAPS IT WILL BE OVER SOON --
-- AND THERE WILL BE PEACE BETWEEN US.
I WOULD LIKE THAT... I THINK.
...IT'S NOTHING.
IS IT?
I... NO.
SOME FIGHT, HUH, SILVERCLAW? I'LL TELL YOU, WHEN JAN CALLED, I'D BEEN IN DEPOSITIONS ALL WEEK --
-- AND MAN, IT FEELS GOOD TO BREAK THINGS!

KHYSTYM.
IT'S WORKING! IT'S WORKING!
JUST REMEMBER, THESE ARE THE WINTER GUARD -- AND INNOCENT SCIENTISTS! THEY'RE NOT THEMSELVES!
WE WANT TO STOP THEM -- NOT KILL THEM!
WE ARE SURROUNDED BY DEADLY FOES -- OUR AVENUE OF RETREAT CUT OFF -- AND YOUR FIRST THOUGHT IS OF THEIR SAFETY?
IT'S GOOD TO BE AN AVENGER AGAIN...!
ENOUGH CHATTER! FIGHT CAREFULLY -- DON'T WASTE THE FOAM! IT'S THE ONLY WEAPON WE'VE --
PFAM
WHA--?!
PFAM
AH!
EH?
PFAM
PFAM
CAP!
THE CANISTERS -- IT'S AS IF THEY'RE BEING SUPER-HEATED FROM INSIDE, BY MICROWAVES, OR --
YOU STILL LIVE, AVENGERS?
OH YEAH.
OR BY HIM.

WHEN I LEFT YOU, I THOUGHT MY FOLLOWERS WOULD HAVE DISPOSED OF YOU FAR SOONER THAN THIS.
WE DON'T FALL THAT EASILY, PRESENCE.
PFF. YOU ARE INVADERS. IMPURE AND UNCLEAN. BUT THAT --
-- THAT CAN BE REMEDIED...
NO, SERGEI. THEY... THEY ARE NOT RUSSIANS. THEY DO NOT BELONG HERE.
STARLIGHT?
I SAY SEND THEM HOME. LET THEM... SERVE AS A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD NOT TO ANNOY US.
WE WANT TO TALK, PRESENCE. THESE PEOPLE -- IF YOU'VE MUTILATED THEM UNWILLINGLY, IF YOU'VE GOT HOSTILE INTENTIONS...
I THINK NOT, STARLIGHT.
I ORIGINALLY INTENDED MY GIFT FOR RUSSIA ALONE, YES, BUT YOU KNOW I HAVE RETHOUGHT THAT. WE WILL NOT BE SAFE, NOT BE LEFT IN PEACE --
-- NOT WHILE ANY OPPOSE US!
AND THE AVENGERS FEEL THEIR SKIN BURN AWAY --
-- THEIR HEARTS RUPTURE --!

CANADA.
HRAR!
ZAK ZAK ZAK ZAK ZAK ZAK ZAK
THAAAT'S IT, BIG AND HAIRY! FOLLOW THE BIRDIE -- AWAY FROM THE NICE SOLDIERS...
NO, TORG! FORWARD -- CRUSH THEM!
HM?
HEY, TRI-GUY! GEEK IN THE BAY WITH A GLOWING SPHERE!
MIGHT WANT TO CHECK IT OUT -- BUT QUIET!
JUST GIMME A SEC, Y.J. --
"-- AN' I'M ALL OVER IT!"
SOON, SERESTUS.
TRIUMPH WILL BE OURS, IN A MATTER OF --
'SCUSE ME! HI THERE!
MIND IF I BORROW THIS?
THANKS!
EH -- ?
HRH? WHAT... IS THIS? WHAT IS TORG DOING HERE?!
AWRIGHT! GO ME!
WELL, I'LL TELL YOU, TORG -- IF THAT'S YOUR NAME -- RIGHT NOW, WHAT YOU'RE DOING --

PLAMM
-- IS TAKING A NICE, REFRESHING DIP!
SERESTUS, BLAST YOU -- !
SPLSHH
AND, LATER...
WITHOUT THE MONSTER, THEY RETREATED. AND WITH ANY LUCK, IT WON'T BE COMING BACK.
YES, BUT THE ATLANTEANS WILL --
-- ATTUMA'S TOO WRAPPED UP IN EGO TO JUST WALK AWAY.
STILL, IF THINGS GO AS I HOPE, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO COVER THIS WITH FEWER AVENGERS -- HANDLE SOME OF THE OTHER TROUBLE SPOTS...
HI, BABE!
EXCUSE ME, GENTLEMEN.
WHAT, NO SUGAR FOR THE KING? I THINK I WAS PRETTY KEY OUT THERE TODAY.
YOU DID FINE, HANK. BUT WHY THE IDENTITY CHANGE? AND... WHY YELLOWJACKET? WE NEEDED STRENGTH, NOT --
AW, I JUST FELT LIKE IT. AND THINGS WORKED OUT, RIGHT?
WE... NEED TO TALK, HANK. BUT LATER. RIGHT NOW --

-- I'VE GOT SOME BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.
JACK, YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
HUH? SURE.
NO -- NO SWEAT...
I'LL JUST... GET SOME AIR...
WE HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO DO THIS OFFICIALLY, JACK -- SO NOW THAT WE'RE NOT UP TO OUR NECKS IN HOSTILE MERMEN --
-- I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO STEP IN WHILE IRON MAN'S UNAVAILABLE. SO WELCOME TO THE AVENGERS, JACK OF HEARTS.
WE'LL INFORM THE PRESS AND GET YOU YOUR CREDENTIALS AS SOON AS WE HAVE A CHANCE.
THANKS, WASP.
I'M HONORED TO BE AN AVENGER --
-- AND I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY.
I JUST HOPE I WON'T LET THE TEAM DOWN.
JUST FIGHT THE WAY YOU DID TODAY, JACK -- AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT -- !
HMPH. BIG WELCOME FOR THE NEW GUY.
THIS TIME, ANYWAY.
'SCUSE ME, MA'AM. RADIO MESSAGE -- SAYS A DOCTOR NEWELL WILL BE HERE ANY MOMENT?
THAT FOR YOU?
HM?
THANKS, SOLDIER --

"-- THAT'S DEFINITELY FOR ME."
STINGRAY!
GOOD EVENING, JAN. I GOT YOUR CALL, AND CAME AS SOON AS I COULD. I'M MOSTLY ACTIVE AS AN OCEANOGRAPHER, THESE DAYS --
-- BUT IF THE AVENGERS NEED ME, I'M HERE. WHAT DO YOU NEED?
IT'S ATTUMA, WALT. WE WANT TO CUT HIS SUPPLY LINES --
-- AND I THINK YOU'RE BEST SUITED TO THAT...
HMM.
THE AVENGERS HAVE CHANGED --
-- THEY ARE MORE SUITED TO GLOBAL CRISIS.
STILL, THEY HAVE MUCH TO COPE WITH --
-- A.I.M. IN AFRICA, THE WIZARD IN SAO PAOLO, ARMED UPRISINGS ON ALL CONTINENTS, AND MORE --
ALL AS YOU WISHED, FATHER.
BUT -- IT DOES NOT SEEM HONORABLE, LETTING OTHERS FIGHT OUR BATTLES FOR US.

HONORABLE?
MAKE NO MISTAKE, MARCUS -- HONOR IS A MAN'S GREATEST POSSESSION, AND IT MUST BE GUARDED ABOVE ALL ELSE. BUT HONOR IS PERSONAL.
WAR IS FOUGHT THROUGH SURROGATES -- OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE MERELY A DUEL.
YES, FATHER.
LISTEN CAREFULLY, MY SON, FOR THIS IS NOT SOMETHING YOU SHOULD MISTAKE.
THE TRUE COMMANDER USES ALL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF A BATTLE, NOT JUST THE MOVEMENTS OF ARMIES.
I DID NOT WISH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE AVENGERS' WEAKNESS -- BUT I HAVE NO HESITATION IN CAUSING WEAKNESS. THAT IS OUR GOAL.
WE DID THIS -- WE SET THESE FORCES IN MOTION, IN ORDER TO SOW DISSENSION AND CHAOS. AND IT IS WORKING.
THE FORCES OF THIS TIME ARE SCATTERED, AND THEY ARE UNABLE TO ORGANIZE A CONCERTED DEFENSE.
NOW WE SHALL TAKE THE NEXT STEP -- ANOTHER WORLDWIDE MESSAGE, THIS TIME CALLING FOR RECRUITS TO THE CAUSE OF KANG.
MILITARY MEN, OUTLAWS AND SO-CALLED "SUPER-VILLAINS." WE SHALL WELCOME THEM ALL. SEND OUT THE CALL, MARCUS --
-- PROVIDING CONTACT PLACES AND TIMES FOR THEM TO CONGREGATE.
BUT -- WE HAVE AN ARMY, FATHER --
-- MASSED IN THE FUTURE, AWAITING OUR CALL!
YES, WE DO. BUT AGAINST AN INVADING ARMY, A POPULACE UNITES, BECOMING STRONGER. AGAINST THEIR OWN, HOWEVER --
-- THEY HESITATE, CHOOSE SIDES -- AND INEVITABLY, ARE LOST. NOW GO.
YES, FATHER...

CHINA.
THE CHINESE SEEM TO THINK WE'RE INSANE, TAKING ON THE DEVIANTS ALONE. BUT THEY'RE NOT GOING TO STOP US.
THEY'VE GOT NO GREAT LOVE FOR ME, AND AS FAR AS THEY'RE CONCERNED, THE REST OF US ARE TAINTED BY ASSOCI --
WARBIRD! I SENSE SEISMIC ACTIVITY -- STRONG, LOCAL AND INCREASING!
WHAT -- ?
WHAT HE'S TRYING TO SAY, FEARLESS LEADER, IS --
-- EARTHQUAAAAAKE!
AND FOR A QUARTER-MILE IN ALL DIRECTIONS, THE GROUND HEAVES, BUCKLES, AND --
KRAKKKKKMMMMMMM
HEY!
MY SENSORS INDICATE THAT THE EFFECT IS FADING, WARBIRD.
BUT THE ENTIRE VILLAGE IS NO MORE -- IT HAS BEEN DROPPED BENEATH THE EARTH'S SURFACE.

BUT -- BUT EARTHQUAKES DON'T JUST *START* AND *STOP* LIKE THAT! WHAT COULD HAVE -- ?
THE *DEVIANTS,* SILVERCLAW --
-- IT WAS THE *DEVIANTS.*
YES, HUMAN.
YOU ARE IN *MY* DOMAIN NOW --
-- SO LET US SEE HOW WELL YOU FARE AGAINST US *THIS* TIME...
CANADA.
...PERHAPS WE CAN SEND *HERCULES* TO SAO PAOLO...
THE HUMAN TORCH IS *ALREADY* ON HIS WAY THERE, WASP. THE GOVERNMENT WANTS THE AVENGERS TO CONCENTRATE ON *KANG* --
-- MOUNT AN *ASSAULT* ON HIM AS SOON AS *POSSIBLE.*
YOU'RE OUR *LIAISON,* DUANE, AND IN THIS CASE, WE'LL LET THE *FEDS* MAKE THAT CALL.
WE'RE STRETCHED A LITTLE *THIN* RIGHT NOW, BUT WE'LL DEAL WITH HIM DIRECTLY AS QUICKLY AS WE *CAN.*
UNDERSTOOD. MY ONLY FEAR --
-- *IS* THAT THAT MAY NOT BE *SOON ENOUGH...*
MADAME *WASP!* QUICKLY! COME *QUICKLY!*

WHAT ON EARTH--?
HANK!
HE WAS JUST OFFERING TO TEACH US "MADEMOISELLE FROM ARMENTIERES," MA'AM -- WHEN HE JUST GASPED AND FELL...
HE'S BARELY BREATHING -- HIS PULSE IS ERRATIC --
BLAST IT -- HE'D BEEN ACTING ODDLY, BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST HIM GETTING HIS CONFIDENCE BACK! MAYBE IT WENT A LITTLE FAR, BUT --
OH, HANK -- WHAT'S HAPPENED TO -- ?
HANK!
HIS -- HIS HAND! HIS ARM!
HE'S -- TURNING TRANSPARENT -- STARTING TO FADE AWAY -- !
RUSSIA.
OHHHH...

I'M -- I'M ALIVE? BUT WHAT I FELT --
RADIATION OF THAT LEVEL -- IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH TO --
BONITA JUAREZ FALLS SILENT. SHE REMEMBERS --
-- REMEMBERS ANOTHER TIME SHE SHOULD HAVE DIED, BUT DID NOT. SHE HAD INGESTED ENOUGH POISON TO KILL ANYONE, BUT IT DID NOT AFFECT HER.
AND SHE WONDERS, ONCE AGAIN, WISHING SHE UNDERSTOOD THE LORD'S PLAN FOR HER, AND WHY SHE WAS CHOSEN TO RECEIVE THESE POWERS.
BUT SHE SHAKES HER HEAD, CLEARING IT. ENOUGH OF THIS. SHE IS AN AVENGER --
THOR? THOR, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
-- AND SHE HAS A JOB TO DO.
FIREBIRD?
GOOD. THE MADMAN'S LIGHTNING COULD NOT AFFECT ME, OF COURSE, BUT IF THOU ART HALE, THEN THE OTHERS MUST BE AS WELL.
I'M -- NOT SO SURE --
EH? NONSENSE, GIRL.
SEE -- CAPTAIN AMERICA RISES. HIS SHIELD MUST SURELY HAVE PROTECTED HIM -- AND THOU, NO DOUBT -- FROM THE ONSLAUGHT.
HO, CAPTAIN! LET US GATHER OUR FORCES, AND --
HLLK--!

NO!
IT CANNOT -- IT CANNOT BE!
CAPTAIN AMERICA -- DEAD?!
AVENGERS -- TRANSFORMED TO THESE UNDEAD MONSTROSITIES!?
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
I MUST ADMIT IT -- THERE IS SUCH JOY IN A CAMPAIGN SO SUCCESSFUL -- !

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN!
STINGRAY. A.K.A. DR. WALTER NEWELL. OCEANOGRAPHER AND AQUABIOLOGIST. INACTIVE AVENGER.
MISSION STATUS: TEMP ACTIVE.
FROM HIS ENCOUNTER REPORT:
I PROCEEDED EAST AND NORTH FROM ROLLO BAY AS REQUESTED, SEARCHING FOR ATTUMA'S FORCES.
APPROXIMATELY FIVE MILES OFFSHORE...
KURT BUSIEK WRITER MANUEL GARCIA & BOB LAYTON ARTISTS
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

...I FOUND THEM.
NOW!
THE SURFACEWORLDER SPY IS IN OUR CLUTCHES!
KILL HIM!
THEY WERE ON ME IN SECONDS.
SORRY, BOYS --
-- BUT I'M NOT IN YOUR TRAP --
MY BATTLE-SUIT COULD TAKE THE PUNISHMENT TEMPORARILY, AS I EXPECTED. AND I NEEDED THEM CLOSE...
ZAKT
-- YOU'RE IN MINE!
...OR ELECTRIFYING MY EXTERIOR WOULDN'T HAVE DONE MUCH GOOD.
AS IT WAS, A FEW OF THEM HAD HUNG BACK...
QUICKLY! QUICKLY! KILL HIM!
HE HAS DOWNED THE COMMANDER!
...BUT A FEW WELL-PLACED ELECTRO-BOLTS TOOK CARE OF THAT.
ZAKT ZAKT ZAKT
UHH!
AIIIRRH!

AND WHAT THEY WERE PROTECTING... WAS JUST WHAT WE EXPECTED. A PRE-FAB BLOCKHOUSE...
...HOLDING THE PROCESSING PLANT ATTUMA'S FORCES ON THE SURFACE USED TO KEEP THEIR BREATHING HELMETS OXYGENATED AND FUNCTIONAL.
TARGET LOCATED.
I COLLECTED THE POWER PACKS FROM THE AQUA-TROOPERS' GUNS...
...RECONNOITERED THE PLANT...
...AND CLEARED IT OF ALL ENEMY PERSONNEL.
NNH!
GHKK--!
THEN I REWIRED THE POWER PACKS, PLANTED THEM WHERE THEY'D DO THE MOST GOOD...
KHWMBB
...AND SKEDADDLED.

MY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, I RETURNED TO THE MAIN OPERATION, AND REPORTED IN.
ROLLO BAY, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
AVENGERS TEMPORARY SQUAD BETA: SCARLET WITCH (ACTING LEADER), STINGRAY, JACK OF HEARTS, HERCULES.
OBJECTIVE: REPEL ATLANTEAN INVASION OF CANADA.
STINGRAY TO SCARLET WITCH. COME IN, SCARLET WITCH. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED --
KRAKT
-- WITH COMPLETE SUCCESS!
SHA...MM
KSSH
COPY THAT, STINGRAY. GREAT WORK.
ONCE YOU'VE CAUGHT YOUR BREATH, THOUGH, WE COULD USE YOU DOWN HERE...
NEAR WUWEI, CHINA.
AVENGERS TEMPORARY SQUAD GAMMA: WARBIRD (ACTING LEADER), VISION, SILVERCLAW, BLACK WIDOW, SHE-HULK.
OBJECTIVE: BLOCK INCURSION OF DEVIANT FORCES FROM UNDERGROUND.
NOT GOOD, PALS AND GALS -- NOT GOOD AT ALL.
THEY DROPPED THE WHOLE VILLAGE UNDERGROUND. NOW WE'RE ON THEIR TURF -- AND SURE, NUMBERS DON'T COUNT FOR MUCH AGAINST US --
-- BUT THEY'RE SURE HAPPY ABOUT SOMETHING -- !
THEY'VE PROBABLY GOT ORDINANCE THAT CAN OUTPOWER US, SHE-HULK, IF THEY CAN PIN US DOWN.
BUT I'VE DONE SOME READING IN U.S. INTEL FILES ON THE DEVIANTS -- AND I'M GOING TO TRY SOMETHING...

WHO LEADS THIS RABBLE?!
I NAME YOU COWARD, HIDING BEHIND WEAPONS AND BODYGUARDS! COWARD AND WORSE! I NAME YOU UNFIT TO LEAD!
HUH? WHAT'RE YOU -- ?
SHH!
BY YOUR OWN RULES, WHICH DECREE THAT ONLY THE STRONG SHALL LEAD -- I CHALLENGE YOU TO SINGLE COMBAT --
-- FOR LEADERSHIP OF YOUR ARMY!
WELL?
I AM DULPUS! I LEAD HERE!
BUT A WOMAN CANNOT CHALLENGE FOR LEADERSHIP! NOR A HUMAN!
HAH!
OH?
AND DO YOU FEAR WOMEN, THEN, MIGHTY DULPUS?
DO YOU FEAR WOMEN AND HUMANS?
THERE IS A LOW MUTTERING AMONG THE DEVIANT SOLDIERS -- AND ALL EYES TURN TO DULPUS.
SHE HAS HIM. SHE KNOWS IT -- AND HE DOES, TOO.
VERY WELL!
YOU SHALL BATTLE MY DESIGNATED CHAMPION, AS IS MY RIGHT AS LEADER! AND WHEN YOU FALL --
FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT
SLAVE SLAVE
-- YOU SHALL BECOME MY BODY-SLAVE!
IS THIS WISE, WARBIRD?
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, VISION.

I MERELY ASK --
-- IF YOU DO THIS BECAUSE YOU THINK IT THE BEST STRATAGEM --
-- OR BECAUSE YOU ARE STILL UNSETTLED AT THE ATTENTIONS OF THE SCARLET CENTURION, IN NEW YORK, AND SEEK TO ESCAPE YOUR OWN THOUGHTS.
...
DOESN'T MUCH MATTER NOW, DOES IT? EITHER WAY, I BUST THIS CLOWN UP, WHOEVER IT IS -- AND WE ALL GO HOME.
SO BRING IT ON -- BRING IT ON!
I AM HERE, HUMAN WOMAN. I AM GLOMM, DESIGNATED CHAMPION OF DULPUS.
WE FIGHT NOW, YES?
OH GREAT. WHAT IS HE, NINE FEET TALL?
THIS MAY NOT BE AS EASY AS I'D HOPED...!
KHYSTYM, SIBERIA.
SHFOW
KRAKK
FROM THIS FORBIDDEN ZONE, DEADLY SPECTERS HAVE DRIFTED OUTWARD -- THE SKELETAL, RADIOACTIVE THRALLS OF THE BEING KNOWN AS THE PRESENCE.
ALREADY, SNEZHNOGORSK, NORILSK AND AGATA ARE INFECTED -- THEIR PEOPLE TRANSFORMED BY THE SPECTERS' TOUCH, THEIR MINDS SUBSUMED.
THE SPECTERS' DRIFT ON. AND HERE, AT THE CENTER --

AVENGERS TEMPORARY SQUAD ALPHA:
CAPTAIN AMERICA (LEADER), THOR, BLACK KNIGHT, FIREBIRD, QUICKSILVER.
OBJECTIVE: INVESTIGATE AND CONTAIN RADIOACTIVE DISTURBANCE IN SIBERIA.
FIGHT ON, FIREBIRD -- FIGHT ON! THOUGH OUR FOES BE NUMBERLESS -- STILL WE SHALL TRIUMPH! WE MUST!
I DON'T KNOW, THOR --
ONLY THOR AND FIREBIRD REMAIN, IMMUNE TO THE POISONOUS TOUCH THAT TOOK THEIR TEAMMATES.
AND THOSE TEAMMATES -- THEIR MINDS GONE, THEIR BODIES TRANSFORMED -- HAVE JOINED THE FORCES ARRAYED AGAINST THEM.
OUR FELLOW AVENGERS DO TRUST IN US TO SAVE THEM! TO SEE THEM WHOLE AND HALE ONCE MORE --
-- AYE, E'EN IF WE MUST BATTER THEM SENSELESS TO ACCOMPLISH IT!
WOMM
AND AS IF IN RESPONSE TO THOR'S IMPASSIONED SPEECH --
KRAT
UHH!
ZOUNDS! QUICKSILVER'S STRENGTH HATH BEEN GREATLY MAGNIFIED!
AND HIS TOUCH --
-- BURNS!

AWAY, THEN! LET A MIGHTY WIND SWEEP YOU HENCE --
-- THAT YOU BOTHER US NO MORE, FOR A FEW MOMENTS!
THOR!
LOOK OUT -- BEHIND YOU!
BY THE WORLD TREE! CAPTAIN AMERICA!
THE LIVING LEGEND MAKES NO RESPONSE -- EXCEPT TO BEAR DOWN, WITH A STRENGTH FAR, FAR GREATER THAN HUMAN...
FIGHT THIS, CAPTAIN!
ASSERT THINE INDOMITABLE WILL -- AND BREAK FREE OF THIS UNSEEMLY THRALLDOM!
AND THEN, FINALLY, HE SPEAKS -- IN A VOICE THAT SOUNDS RUSTY, UNUSED -- DISEASED --
YOU... WILL BE ABSORBED, INTRUDER... BROUGHT INTO THE COLLECTIVE MIND...
...INTO THE EMBRACE... OF THE PRESENCE...
EH--?
YOU'VE GOT TO FORGET CAP, THOR -- STOP TRYING TO WAKE HIM UP! THAT'S HIS BODY --
-- BUT HIS MIND IS DEAD, LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? HE'S DEAD!
FORGET?
NEVER!

BLOW, WINDS! ROLL, CLOUDS! STORMS OF EARTH AND SKY, RAGE AT THIS OBSCENITY! THOR, GOD OF THUNDER, COMMANDS THEE!
FOR WHAT HATH TRANSPIRED HERE TODAY -- IS MOST FOULLY, VILELY WRONG!
LONG AGO DID I ACCEPT THAT THE MORTALS I WALKED WITH WOULD DIE BEFORE ME -- THAT THEIR LIVES WERE BRIEF AS A SUMMER'S AFTERNOON --
-- BUT CAPTAIN AMERICA IS MORE THAN JUST A MAN!
HE IS THE BEST OF HIS PEOPLE -- THE BEST OF MANKIND --
-- AND HE DESERVES BETTER THAN THIS!
MARY, MOTHER OF GOD...!
THIS MAN -- THIS HERO --
-- HE SHOULD NOT HAVE DIED LIKE THIS!
NOT FALLEN TO AN ATTACK HE COULD NOT DEFEND AGAINST! NOT MADE A MINDLESS SLAVE TO A CAUSE HE WOULD HAVE DESPISED! NOT THIS MAN!
HE DESERVED MORE -- AYE, HE DESERVED BETTER --
-- AND BY MY HAMMER -- HE SHALL BE AVENGED!

DAMOCLES BASE. EARTH ORBIT.
KANG THE CONQUEROR, THE ORCHESTRATOR OF THIS WORLDWIDE CHAOS, OBSERVES HIS HANDIWORK --
-- AND IS WELL PLEASED.
AND ON IT GOES -- THE OLD FAMILIAR DANCE. A FEW WORDS -- AND THEY RISE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS.
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER THEY FIGHT FOR MY FAVOR, OR TO SEIZE POWER FOR THEMSELVES -- OR SIMPLY OUT OF FEAR AND PANIC.
THEY DO MY BIDDING NONETHELESS --
-- FOR THESE FEW REBELS, FREEBOOTERS AND WOULD-BE QUISLINGS SOW FEAR AND DISORDER. JUST AS I WISHED.
EXCUSE ME, MY FATHER --
-- BUT THE FIRST GROUP OF... APPLICANTS... IS HERE.
VERY GOOD, MARCUS. WAS THERE RESISTANCE FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AT THE RENDEZVOUS POINTS?
THERE WAS. IT WAS EASILY HANDLED.
I WOULD EXPECT NO LESS. I SHALL BE THERE SHORTLY.
AND...
SO.
WE SENT OUT A CALL FOR RECRUITS.
AND YOU ARE THE RESPONSE.
YOU THERE!
UH... ME?
YES. WHAT QUALIFIES YOU FOR A PLACE IN MY ARMIES? SWIFTLY!

WELL, I --
AUSTRALIAN ARMY TRAINING, SIR. SERVED SIX YEARS. SOLDIERED PRIVATE, TOO, IN --
HUH?
WHAT?
HEY!
WH --?
ENOUGH! WHIRLWIND'S HERE --
-- AND I DON'T WAIT IN LINE BEHIND BUMS AND LOSERS! I GOT MORE POWER THAN THE REST OF THESE CLOWNS PUT TOGETHER, KANG --
-- SO I FIGURE I'M JUST WHAT YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR IN RUNNIN' THE EARTH, AN' I SHOULD GET CLASS TREATMENT.
I WANT TO BE A GENERAL... AT LEAST.
TEK
OH, YOU DO, EH?
WELL THEN, I HAVE YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT, "GENERAL".
TELL YOUR FELLOWS ON THE MUDBALL BELOW --
-- THAT KANG ALREADY HAS POWER!
KZAK
WHAT HE SEEKS IS OBEDIENCE, ABILITY AND DISCIPLINE --
-- AND HE WILL TOLERATE NOTHING LESS!
UH --
AH --
NOW... WHERE WERE WE?

CHINA.
THEY HAVE CIRCLED EACH OTHER FOR SOME MINUTES --
--SEARCHING FOR A WEAKNESS, GAUGING THE OTHER'S SKILL --
YOU FLY VERY NICE, HUMAN WOMAN. DO YOU FIGHT, TOO?
JUST WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT, GLOMM. BUT SINCE YOU ASK --
ZRAKK
HUH --?
HEH. YOU DON'T HURT GLOMM THAT WAY, HUMAN WOMAN. I HAVE NO BONES, NO ORGANS -- SAVE ONE.
I SHAPE MY MASS HOW I CHOOSE.
STILL, FIRST STRIKE IS YOURS, HUMAN WOMAN.
AND NOW --
-- YOU FEEL THE EMBRACE OF GLOMM!
HIS LUNGE IS FAST -- FASTER THAN SHE'D HAVE THOUGH HIM CAPABLE OF --
-- AND HIS GRIP IS IMPOSSIBLY STRONG. AND THEN SHE FEELS HIM SHIFTING -- HIS MASS FLOWING UP HER BODY -- OVER HER FACE --
-- SUFFOCATING HER --

SIBERIA.
THOR -- WATCH YOUR BACK!
WHERE ARE WE GOING, THOR? THOR?!
SHORTLY, AT THE CENTER OF THE FORBIDDEN ZONE...
SO. HE HATH A PERSONAL GUARD, DOES HE?
STRIKE, STORM-CLOUDS!
LET THESE FOUL BEINGS FEEL THY WRATH!
WHUMPP
FOR THOR WOULD SPEAK TO THEIR MASTER -- UNDISTURBED!
AH, THOR.
YOU HAVE GREAT POWER, PRETENDER TO GODHOOD. BUT I AM THE PRESENCE --

-- AND I AM POWER PERSONIFIED!
IF YOU CANNOT BE TRANSFORMED... YOU WILL BE SLAIN.
I THINK NOT, PRESENCE. FOR I AM THOR, DO YOU HEAR?
I-- AM-- -THOR!
-- AND THOU SHALT JUDGE FOR THYSELF WHETHER I BE PRETENDING!
AND THE WINDS LASH AROUND THEM -- WHIPPING FASTER, CLOSER, FORMING A WALL AROUND THEM. AND THOR CALLS OUT TO THEM --
-- AND THEIR FURY INCREASES.
FIREBIRD, HER EYES WIDE, FEELS HER SKIN PRICKLE. THIS IS NOT THE THOR SHE IS USED TO.
HER FAITH TELLS HER THERE IS NO GOD BUT ONE. BUT THIS -- THIS --
<SERGEI -- WHAT DOES HE -- ?>
<PFF! SOME ABSORPTION TRICK WITH HIS HAMMER, STARLIGHT.
<NOTHING TO CONCERN YOURSELF OVER. I SHALL SOON OVERLOAD IT.>
DO THY WORST, VILLAIN.
THOU HAST USED THY POWER BADLY.
THOU SHALT USE IT NO MORE.

AND THE PRESENCE FINDS, TO HIS HORROR --
-- THAT HE CANNOT TURN HIS POWER-BLAST OFF -- !
BOZHE MOI! MY -- MY POWER -- !
WHAT -- WHAT ARE YOU DOING -- ?
HEAR NOW THE JUDGMENT OF THOR, CREATURE!
THOU HAST CAUSED THE DEATH OF A MAN FINER THAN THOU SHALT EVER KNOW! AND THOU SHALT PAY FOR THY CRIME --
-- WITH THY LIFE!
SERGEI...?
BUT THE PRESENCE DOES NOT RESPOND.
INDEED, HE CANNOT...!

GLOMM! GLOMM! GLOMM!
NO MORE DEFIANCE, HUMAN WOMAN?
BLACK WIDOW! WE MUST --!
NO, VISION! NOT WHILE SHE HAS A CHANCE...!
SHE STRUGGLES TO MOVE.
BUT IT'S LIKE SWIMMING THROUGH CLAY. THICK, HOT -- UNBELIEVABLY STRONG. IT ENVELOPS HER FULLY -- AND SHE IS BLIND AND DEAF.
EXCEPT -- HER POWER TO ABSORB ENERGY -- SHE SENSES A SOURCE -- NEAR, VERY NEAR --
AND SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, SHE INCHES TOWARD IT.
HER MIND GOES DARK RED FROM THE LACK OF OXYGEN. DARKER -- DARKER --
AND THEN --

TZAKK
IT IS GLOMM'S SOLE INTERNAL ORGAN.
HIS BRAIN. HIS HEART.
GLX!
THE RESULTS, NEEDLESS TO SAY --
-- ARE IMPRESSIVE.
HUHH... HFF... HUHH...
AND...
SO YOUR DEVIANTNESS -- WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?
SURRENDER? OR A COMPLETE BETRAYAL OF WHAT PASSES FOR YOUR CODE OF HONOR -- IN FRONT OF YOUR MEN?

DOST THOU FEEL IT, VILLAIN?
THY LAST SPARK OF POWER -- OF LIFE -- FADING, IN RETRIBUTION FOR THE LIVES THOU HAST SO CRUELLY --
THOR, WAIT! STOP!
PLEASE -- DO NOT KILL HIM. I SHARE HIS POWER -- PERHAPS I CAN DRAIN IT FROM YOUR COMRADES --
-- RESTORE THEM, AS HE RESTORED HIS SON...
THOU ART ABLE TO DO THIS?
I... THINK SO.
THOU SHALT RESTORE ALL -- THE WINTER GUARD, THE SCIENTISTS -- ALL WHO HAVE FALLEN.
OF COURSE.
THEN IT IS A BARGAIN.
BUT I MUST ASK -- WHY? WHY SAVE THIS MONSTER'S LIFE?
THIS DREAM OF GLOBAL UNITY... WAS HIS, NOT MINE. I LOSE NOTHING BY REVERSING IT. BUT JUST AS I SHARE HIS POWER... I SHARE HIS CURSE.
OUR LETHAL POWER PREVENTS US FROM ASSOCIATING LONG WITH OTHERS. WITHOUT HIM, I WOULD BE ALONE.
PERHAPS, WOMAN... THOU WOULDST BE BETTER OFF THAT WAY.
YES...
...PERHAPS...

LATER.
THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE ARRIVED, TO DEAL WITH THE AFTERMATH. SOLDIERS TO SECURE THE AREA. MEDICS TO TREAT THE SURVIVORS.
FOR THERE ARE SURVIVORS. STARLIGHT'S EFFORTS WERE SUCCESSFUL, THOUGH THOSE TRANSFORMED REMAIN WEAK, AND WILL NEED CAREFUL TREATMENT.
THE PRESENCE HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER ARREST, AND WILL BE CONFINED. STARLIGHT, FOR HER PART, GOES ALONG UNRESISTING, TO ACCOMPANY HIM.
THOR?
THOR CAN ONLY SHAKE HIS HEAD AT HER CHOICE.
I'M GLAD IT ALL WORKED OUT -- BUT I HAVE A QUESTION. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME I SHOULD HAVE DIED, BUT DIDN'T -- AND I'M CONCERNED.
MY BELIEFS SAY THAT THE TRUE REWARDS OF HEAVEN COME AFTER DEATH. SO IF I CAN'T DIE, I MAY BE FOREVER DENIED THEM.
IF THAT'S THE LORD'S WILL, I'LL BEAR IT. BUT --
DID YOU MEAN IT, WHEN YOU SAID YOU'VE ACCEPTED THAT YOUR FRIENDS WILL DIE, AND YOU'LL JUST... GO ON?
AYE.
I HAVE SEEN MANY DIE, IN MY TIME. TOO MANY. AND WHILE ONCE THEY WENT TO VALHALLA, TO GREATER GLORY -- THAT DID NOT MAKE IT EASIER.
I HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR THE AVENGERS, AND AN ATTACHMENT TO THEM -- AS A GROUP. BUT AS INDIVIDUALS --
-- I KNOW TOO WELL THAT A CENTURY HENCE, I MAY STILL BE AN AVENGER, BUT MOST OF THOSE I KNOW WILL NOT.
A WORD OF ADVICE, YOUNG BONITA. IF THOU ART IMMORTAL, BE CAREFUL OF MAKING CLOSE BONDS WITH MORTALS. IT BRINGS GREAT PAIN.
I HAD THOUGHT TO HAVE HELD MYSELF ALOOF -- DISTANCED --
-- BUT I SEE THAT I HAVE NOT. I MUST... CONSIDER THIS.

WOW. LOOKS LIKE THEY GO ON FOREVER...
SO, SILVERCLAW...
...GOOD TO BE THE KING, HUH?
I SUPPOSE...
OH, RELAX. WE'RE NOT STAYING. NOT THAT I COULDN'T GET USED TO THIS...
BUT OKAY, OKAY.
WARBIRD TO BASE. COME IN, BASE.
WASP HERE. WHAT'S UP?
ONE EXPLANATION LATER...
GREAT. NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO --
-- IS FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH A SURRENDERED DEVIANT ARMY.
I GUESS I'LL CHECK WITH THE BLACK PANTHER. SINCE WAKANDA'S GOT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH DEVIANT LEMURIA --
-- MAYBE HE CAN GET SOMEONE TO TAKE THEM OFF YOUR HANDS. I'LL CALL BACK AS SOON AS I'VE GOT MORE INFO.
WASP OUT.
JUST ANOTHER SEC, HANK, DELROY --
"-- I'VE GOT ONE MORE CALL..."
WASP TO TEAM BETA. COME IN, TEAM...

SCARLET WITCH HERE, AND...
IS THAT HANK, UP AND AROUND? THAT'S GREAT!
I KNEW YOU'D BE FINE, HANK. WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE PROBLEM?
IT WAS... COMPLICATED. THE IMPORTANT THING IS, HANK'S GOOD AS NEW NOW. BETTER, MAYBE.
SO HOW ARE THINGS THERE?
"EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE FINE, AT LEAST FOR NOW. THANKS TO STINGRAY, WE CUT THEIR SUPPLY LINES...
"...AND THEY WERE FORCED TO RETREAT.
"AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THEY'VE RETREATED ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC. THERE'S NO SIGN OF THEM ANYWHERE IN THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE.
THE CANADIANS ARE PATROLLING, OF COURSE, BUT --
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER HOT SPOT SHUT DOWN. NICE WORK. I'LL SEE IF I CAN'T CONTACT THE SUB-MARINER --
-- FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN ATLANTIS --
BUT BEFORE SHE CAN CONTINUE, THERE'S A BURST OF STATIC -- AND --
EXCUSE THE INTERRUPTION, WASP.
BUT THE AVENGERS LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED IN WASHINGTON URGENTLY, TO CONFER WITH THE JOINT CHIEFS OVER THE KANG SITUATION.
PRIORITY
DUANE -- ?

WE'VE JUST BEEN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO BRING THE FIELD TEAMS IN, GET THEM SOME REST BEFORE HEADING OUT AGAIN.
YOU NEED US, DUANE, YOU'VE GOT US.
THANKS, JAN. FREEMAN OUT.
THEY'LL BE HERE.
AND I HOPE THEY CAN COME UP WITH A WAY OF ENDING KANG'S THREAT SWIFTLY AND CLEANLY, VAL --
-- BECAUSE I DON'T MIND SAYING, I DON'T MUCH LIKE THE BACKUP PLAN.
NO, I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL...

EARTH. THE 40TH CENTURY.
KANG!
KANG!
KANG!
KANG!
KANG!
KANG!
KANG!
SUCH A WONDERFUL SOUND. THE ROAR OF LOYALTY. OF DEVOTION. OF WORSHIP.
AND ONE DAY, MY SON...

THE PLAZA IS OPEN, PLAIN, FUNCTIONAL. IT HAS NO FORMAL NAME, THOUGH IT IS SPOKEN OF IN HUSHED TONES ON A THOUSAND THOUSAND WORLDS.
IT IS KNOWN AS "CENTER" -- AND IT IS THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT OF KANG THE CONQUEROR.
LIFE DURING WARTIME
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
A STAN LEE PRESENTATION FEATURING: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!
...THEY WILL ROAR FOR YOU.
KURT BUSIEK WRITER MANUEL GARCIA & BOB LAYTON RESERVE ARTISTS
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT
THE PILLAR OF CONQUEST SHOWS THE WORLDS OF MY EMPIRE, SHIFTING THROUGH THEIR IMAGES UNENDINGLY.
IT IS VAST NOW, MARCUS -- BUT IT WILL BE VASTER STILL, WITH YOU AS MY SON AND HEIR.
FOR TOO MANY YEARS, I STRUGGLED AGAINST A PREDETERMINED FATE -- AGAINST BECOMING, IN TIME, THAT PARCHMENT-SNIFFER IMMORTUS.
I THOUGHT ONLY OF MY PRESENT, AND SAW THE FUTURE AS A CURSE.
BUT NOW I AM FREE OF THAT FOUL DESTINY, AND HAVE TURNED MY THOUGHTS TO THE FUTURE I SHALL FORGE -- THE DYNASTY I WILL FOUND.
YOU, MARCUS, HAVE PROVED YOURSELF AN ABLE WARRIOR, A FINE COMMANDER -- AND HAVE EARNED THE RESPECT AND DEVOTION OF THE MEN AS MY CHIEF LIEUTENANT.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL. IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A FAMILY... A CROWN PRINCE.
AND... MY MOTHER, NOBLE SIRE? DOES THAT MAKE HER THE EMPRESS?
PFAH! DO NOT THINK TOO MUCH OF WOMEN, MY SON, OR GIVE THEM TOO GREAT A STATUS. THEY ARE A DISTRACTION AND A WEAKNESS --
-- GOOD TO SERVE AS SOLDIERS OR MOTHERS, BUT LITTLE MORE.
I HAVE TOLD YOU OF YOUR BIRTH...

"...HOW YOUR MOTHER WAS SELECTED FROM AMONG PRINCESSES, SCIENTISTS, ATHLETES -- THE FINEST BREEDING STOCK IN ALL MY EMPIRE.
"EACH WAS SCANNED, TESTED FOR GENETIC PURITY, FOR AN IDEAL MATCH WITH MY OWN D.N.A. --
"-- AND WHEN THE PERFECT MATE WAS FOUND, SHE WAS INSTALLED IN MY PRIVATE CHAMBERS FOR AS LONG AS IT TOOK."
M-MY LORD KANG, I --
SILENCE. I DO NOT NEED YOU TO SPEAK.
APPROACH ME.
"SHE WAS SENT 25 YEARS INTO THE PAST TO BEAR YOU, ON A SECLUDED PLANET --
"-- AND I VISITED YOU EVERY FORTNIGHT, TO SUPERVISE YOUR TRAINING AND UPBRINGING.
"IT TOOK A MONTH OF MY TIME TO SEE YOU GROW FROM A CLUMSY YOUTH -- "
AGAIN!
AND CONCENTRATE!
"-- INTO A SKILLED SOLDIER, THE SUPERIOR OF ALL YOUR INSTRUCTORS.
WAK
KRAK
KRAT
"IT WAS A PLEASURE TO SEE YOUR FINAL EXERCISES."

BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER -- THE GENES THAT FORMED YOU ONLY GAVE YOU POTENTIAL. IT IS WHAT A MAN ACCOMPLISHES THAT SETS HIM APART --
-- THE MARK HE LEAVES ON THE WORLD AROUND HIM, NOT THE ANCESTORS HE CAN NAME.
YOUR MOTHER IS YOUR PAST, MARCUS -- AND THE PAST IS OVER. IT IS YOUR FUTURE -- OUR FUTURE -- THAT SHOULD CONCERN YOU NOW.
YES, FATHER. OF COURSE.
BUT TO WORK. WE HAVE TARRIED ENOUGH.
THE CONQUEST OF THE 21ST CENTURY LIES BEFORE US. THE GROUND HAS BEEN PREPARED --
-- AND THE TIME HAS COME TO BEGIN OUR ASSAULT.
THIS TIME PERIOD, ON THIS PLANET, HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY GREATEST CHALLENGE --
-- AND THE CHAMPIONS OF THIS ERA HAVE EARNED MY LASTING RESPECT.
BUT MUCH AS I HAVE ENJOYED STRIVING AGAINST THEM IN TIMES PAST, THE MOMENT HAS ARRIVED TO END THE GAME.
IN COMMEMORATION OF YOUR STATUS AS CROWN PRINCE, I SHALL GIVE YOU THIS ERA AS A VASSAL STATE. IT WILL BE MY CROWNING TRIUMPH --
-- AND YOUR FIRST. THE FIRST OF MANY TO COME.
NOW GO. READY THE INVASION FORCES.
IMMEDIATELY, FATHER.
AND IF THERE IS SOMETHING MORE IN KANG'S MIND AS HE WATCHES THE SCARLET CENTURION LEAVE THE CHAMBER --
-- SOME JUDGMENT STILL HANGING IN THE BALANCE, SOME TEST YET UNCOMPLETED --
-- WELL, HE SAYS NOTHING OF IT.

THE PENTAGON. ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA. THE PRESENT DAY.
THANK YOU FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, AVENGERS.
IT'S OUR PLEASURE, GENERAL McGINTY --
-- MOST OF THE ACTIVE TEAM'S ON R&R FOR A FEW DAYS ANYWAY, AFTER WHAT THEY'VE RECENTLY BEEN THROUGH --
-- SO IT WAS NO TROUBLE.
I READ THE REPORTS ON WHAT YOU AVERTED IN SIBERIA, CAPTAIN AMERICA. A GOOD JOB.
I WAS SORRY TO HEAR OF YOU AND YOUR SQUAD'S INJURIES.
THANKS.
BUT WE AVENGERS HEAL QUICKLY. QUICKSILVER'S ALREADY UP AND AROUND, AND I WON'T BE FAR BEHIND HIM.
WHY DON'T WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS?
OF COURSE.
WHAT WE ASKED YOU HERE TO DISCUSS, NATURALLY, WAS KANG. THAT MADMAN'S DECLARED WAR ON EVERY CIVILIZED NATION ON EARTH --
-- AND AFTER THAT ATTACK ON THE U.N. BUILDING, IT LOOKS AS IF HE'S GOT THE POWER TO MAKE IT STICK.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE PRESIDENT IS DEEPLY CONCERNED -- DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENTIRE SITUATION.
AS IS NATO, THE U.N., AND MORE.

THE SITUATION IN EUROPE, WHERE KANG HAS THREATENED TO ATTACK FIRST, IS PARTICULARLY GRAVE.
KLIK
"HERE, YOU CAN SEE SOME OF THE FORTIFICATIONS BEING BUILT NORTH OF PARIS.
"FRANCE HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY U.N. TROOPS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE, AND SOME OF OUR BOYS AS WELL.
"BUT DESPITE PREPARATIONS BEING MADE ACROSS FRANCE, WE STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THE ATTACK MIGHT COME, OR HOW BEST TO DEFEND AGAINST IT.
"WE WANT TO DO OUR BEST TO ANTICIPATE HIM -- BUT THERE'S BEEN SO MUCH UPHEAVAL AFTER HIS GLOBAL ANNOUNCEMENTS --"
-- UPRISINGS, RIOTS, REFUGEES FLEEING FRENCH CITIES, SUPER-VILLAINS AND OTHERS TRYING TO SEIZE TERRITORY IN KANG'S NAME --
-- IT'S OCCUPIED TOO MANY MEN, TOO MUCH MATERIEL --
-- GIVING US LITTLE TIME TO PREPARE FOR THE TRUE ATTACK.
WHICH IS JUST HOW KANG WANTS IT, OF COURSE.
AND EVEN AT THAT, HE'S JUST SETTING THE STAGE.
HE'S TOLD US HE'S GOING TO ATTACK IN FRANCE, DARING US TO BE AS READY AS WE LIKE --
-- AND THEN THROWN US INTO CHAOS TO PREVENT REAL PREPARATION.
HE WANTS AN EARLY VICTORY -- NOT JUST TO ESTABLISH A BEACHHEAD, BUT TO DEMORALIZE THE WORLD --
-- TO MAKE IT SEEM LIKE HE CAN TELL US EXACTLY WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO, AND WE'RE STILL HELPLESS AGAINST HIM.

EXACTLY.
SO IT'S CRUCIAL THAT WE DENY HIM THAT VICTORY. WE HAVE TO HOLD HIM BACK, HAVE TO BLOODY HIS NOSE -- SHOW THE WORLD THAT EARTH CAN RESIST.
MILLIONS OF LIVES MAY DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS ONE --
EXCUSE ME.
WH-WHAT?
HE -- HE JUST -- LEFT?
I'M SORRY, GENERAL. THOR'S NOT USUALLY LIKE THIS. IF YOU CAN WAIT A MOMENT, I'LL --
NO, WASP -- I THINK I KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. YOU KEEP TALKING --
-- I'LL GO AFTER HIM.
AVENGERS MANSION. MANHATTAN.
SORRY I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT OUT THERE RECENTLY, WANDA --
890 FIFTH AVENUE

-- BUT THE GOVERNMENT'S BEEN RUNNING ME RAGGED.
I'VE BEEN WORKING SO HARD ON HOW TO CRACK KANG'S FORCE-FIELD -- I'VE BARELY HAD TIME TO SLEEP, LET ALONE SUIT UP AS IRON MAN.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, TONY -- WE'VE GOT MORE AVENGERS ACTIVE NOW THAN WE HAVE FOR YEARS. WE'LL GET BY.
I'LL LET CAP AND JAN KNOW YOU -- OOPS! ANOTHER CALL COMING IN...
GOOD EVENING, SCARLET WITCH. I HAVE YOUR CODE-NAME CORRECT, YES?
I AM KRO, WARLORD OF DEVIANT LEMURIA. THIS IS A FORMAL CALL -- TO THANK YOU FOR RETURNING TO US OUR REBELLIOUS TRIBESMEN.
OF... OF COURSE, SIR. WE WERE JUST DOING OUR BEST TO KEEP THE PEACE.
AND LEMURIA DESIRES NOTHING BUT PEACE AND AMICABLE RELATIONS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD. WE ARE IN THE AVENGERS' DEBT --
-- AND YOU MAY CALL ON US WHENEVER YOU CHOOSE.
GOODBYE.
WHEW
TALK ABOUT IMPRESSIVE -- I'VE DEALT WITH DR. DOOM, BUT THAT MAN'S GOT "OMINOUS" DOWN COLD...
AW, YOU COULD TAKE HIM EASY, KID.
SO HE'S THE WARLORD OF AN ENTIRE MONSTROUS RACE -- WHAT OF IT?
YOU'RE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AVENGERS -- AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!
HANK! SO... YOU, AH, DECIDED TO BECOME YELLOWJACKET AGAIN?
UM... YEAH. IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE AN ODD CHOICE, AFTER ALL MY TROUBLES, BUT I'VE SPENT TOO LONG HIDING FROM MY PROBLEMS, OR FROM WHO I AM.
IT'S AS YELLOWJACKET THAT I HAD MY WORST PROBLEMS -- SO IT'S AS YELLOWJACKET I'LL FACE THEM, AND FIND OUT IF I'M TRULY CURED.
I, EH, HOPE THAT DOESN'T WORRY YOU...

NOT A BIT, HANK. YOU'RE ONE OF THE ALL-TIME BEST, NO MATTER WHAT COSTUME YOU WEAR --
-- AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE JUST FINE, I KNOW IT.
THANKS, WANDA. JUST... THANKS.
AND AS TWO OLD FRIENDS SHARE A MOMENT OF WARMTH AND SUPPORT --
-- UPSTAIRS, IN THE PRIVATE QUARTERS OF JONATHAN HART -- A.K.A. THE JACK OF HEARTS...
PERMEATION COMPLETE.
NEUTRO-MISTS FULLY ACTIVE.
ESTIMATED NEUTRALIZATION PERIOD -- 4.2 HOURS.
HE SHAKES HIS HEAD FOR A MOMENT, AND SIGHS.
BUT SOON...
HUH.
BEEN SO LONG SINCE I WORE ANYTHING LIKE THIS, IT FEELS MORE ALIEN THAN MY ARMOR.
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T...
HEY IN THERE -- YOU DECENT?
TRIATHLON!
SURE, I WAS JUST GETTING READY.
MAKE IT DELROY, WHEN I'M OUT OF COSTUME, OKAY?
YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH THAT WHOLE RIGAMAROLE EVERY TIME YOU WANT TO DITCH THE TIN SUIT FOR A WHILE?

PRETTY MUCH. THE ZERO-ENERGY THAT GIVES ME MY POWERS CAN'T BE CONTAINED BY ANYTHING BUT THE ARMOR --
-- BUT THE NEUTRO-MIST NEGATES IT FOR A FEW HOURS, TURNS THE DISCOLORED PART OF MY SKIN BACK THE WAY IT USED TO BE --
-- LETS ME HAVE AT LEAST THE ILLUSION OF A NORMAL LIFE.
SOUNDS ROUGH.
IT'S AN IMPROVEMENT, ACTUALLY -- USED TO BE, I HAD TO STAY IN A DOME WITH THE MISTS ON ALL THE TIME.
BUT LOOK, I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR SETTING UP THIS EVENING.
I'VE BEEN OFF EARTH SO LONG --
-- I BARELY REMEMBER WHICH END OF TOWN'S THE BRONX, AND WHICH IS THE BATTERY.
AH, IT'S NO BIG DEAL. BUT WE OUGHTTA GET GOING. THE GIRLS ARE MEETING US AT THE RESTAURANT --
-- AND YVONNE GETS CRANKY IF SHE HAS TO WAIT AROUND.
YVONNE? SHE'S THE ONE YOU LINED ME UP WITH, RIGHT?
RELAX, YOU'LL LIKE HER. I PROMISE.
I GUESS PHOTON AND JARVIS WERE RIGHT. ALL I HAD TO DO TO START GETTIN' ACCEPTED AS AN AVENGER WAS REACH OUT SOME...
I CALLED A CAB. IT'LL BE HERE IN A FEW --
TRIATHLON? JACK OF HEARTS?
GOT A MINUTE YOU CAN SPARE?
SURE, WARBIRD. WHAT'S UP?
THE VISION AND I WANT TO TALK A LITTLE --

"-- ABOUT THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING..."
I WANTED TO DO THIS QUIETLY, AND WITHOUT INVOLVING TEAM LEADERSHIP. THAT WAY, WE CAN KEEP IT UNOFFICIAL -- AND DENIABLE.
VISION, WHY DON'T YOU TELL THEM WHAT WE'VE LEARNED?
VERY WELL.
WE KNOW JUSTICE AND FIRESTAR ARE UNDERCOVER AT TRIUNE HEADQUARTERS.
THEY AGREED TO IT AS A FAVOR TO IRON MAN, OUTSIDE THE TEAM'S PURVIEW -- AND AFTER THEY TOOK A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.
THEY SENT A REPORT OUT THROUGH PHOTON -- TELLING US THAT THE TRIUNES ARE RECRUITING FOLLOWERS AGAINST SOME PROPHESIED THREAT FROM SPACE --
-- THAT THEY ARE BUILDING A SPACESHIP, TO ENGAGE THIS FOE --
A SPACESHIP?
YEAH, THAT BIT WAS NEWS TO ME, TOO...
-- AND THAT IT IS TO BE POWERED BY THE LIFEFORCE OF THE TRIUNE ACOLYTES.
JUSTICE AND FIRESTAR ARE DOING THEIR BEST. BUT THEY'RE YOUNG, AND NOT EXACTLY EXPERIENCED AT ESPIONAGE.
I THINK WE NEED SOMEONE ELSE ON THE SCENE --
-- SOMEONE WHO CAN GET TO THE BOTTOM OF WHAT'S GOING ON.
WHOA, HOLD IT! HOLD THE PHONE!
I KNOW YOU THINK THE T.U. IS SOME SORTA BIZARRE CULT -- BUT REMEMBER, I'M A MEMBER OF THE UNDERSTANDING. I BELIEVE IN THEIR PRINCIPLES --
-- AN' I DON'T THINK THIS IS RIGHT!
TELL ME, TRIATHLON. YOU HAD THE AVENGERS PRIVATE PRIORITY FREQUENCY BEFORE YOU EVER JOINED. WHERE'D YOU GET IT?
AH... THE TRIUNES.
AND YOU'VE GOT NO WORRIES ABOUT THEM?
YOU THINK THEY'RE ON THE UP-AND-UP, THEY'RE BEING COMPLETELY OPEN ABOUT WHATEVER CONNECTION YOU MIGHT HAVE TO THE 3-D MAN?
AH...

I'M NOT SAYING THEY'RE VILLAINS. I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW. BUT THERE ARE QUESTIONS -- WE ALL KNOW THAT.
AND I WAS IN AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE TOO LONG TO JUST IGNORE SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I'M SAYING LET'S FIND OUT THE TRUTH -- WHATEVER IT IS.
IF THEY'RE GOOD GUYS, GREAT. IF NOT... THERE ARE LIVES AT STAKE.
WASHINGTON.
WHAT'S WRONG, THOR?
NOTHING IS WRONG, FIREBIRD. I MERELY PAUSE TO APPRECIATE THE CHANGING SKY AS IT DOTH SHADE TOWARD NIGHT.
NOW LEAVE ME, PLEASE. I WISH TO BE ALONE.
THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT HAPPENED IN RUSSIA, DOESN'T IT? I'M CONCERNED -- EVERYONE IS.
AND I'D LIKE TO HELP IF I CAN.
WOMAN, I SAID --
YES?

THOU HAST SPIRIT, BONITA JUAREZ, TO STAND UP TO THE SON OF ODIN. IT IS A QUALITY I SEEM TO ENCOUNTER MORE FREQUENTLY OF LATE.
I JUST THINK YOU NEED A FRIEND.
AND WHAT KIND OF FRIEND WOULD I BE IF I LET YOU CHASE ME OFF?
THE DISCUSSION IN THERE -- IT DID SEEM SO TRANSIENT, SO UNIMPORTANT. WAR. DEATH. IT IS NEVER FAR FROM THE LIVES OF MORTALS.
I AM... CONSIDERING LEAVING THE AVENGERS, ONCE THE PRESENT DANGER IS PAST.
LEAVING? BUT WHY?
IN RUSSIA, WHEN I DID THINK CAPTAIN AMERICA TO BE DEAD, I WAS OVERCOME WITH GRIEF, AND RAGE. AND THAT, IN ITSELF, IS THE PROBLEM.
I AM AN IMMORTAL. ALL HUMAN LIVES ARE BRIEF BY COMPARISON TO MINE OWN. AND I HAD CONVINCED MYSELF... CONVINCED MYSELF...
...THAT I WAS NOT TOO ATTACHED TO THESE FIREFLY COMRADES, WHO BLINK OUT SO SWIFTLY.
BUT AS THOU DIDST SEE, IN SIBERIA... I WAS WRONG.
IT IS FOOLISH OF ME, TO MAKE SUCH CLOSE BONDS, CONVINCING MYSELF THAT THESE MORTALS WILL NOT BURN OUT, WILL NOT VANISH. BUT THEY WILL.
AND I AM A GOD, PLAYING AT MORTALITY, PRETENDING TO SOMETHING I AM NOT. I SHOULD STOP.
I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT THAT.
I THINK, IF YOU LEAVE, YOU'LL BE MAKING A MISTAKE -- COSTING YOURSELF SOMETHING PRECIOUS, TO SPARE YOURSELF PAIN.
YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND.
MAYBE NOT. BUT I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU THAT YOU'RE WRONG. YOU SAID YOU'D STAY UNTIL THE CURRENT CRISIS IS OVER.
CAN I HAVE THAT LONG -- TO TRY TO CHANGE YOUR MIND?

MANHATTAN.
OKAY.
I STILL DON'T LIKE IT MUCH, BUT I'M CONVINCED. IF THERE'S DIRT, LET'S FIND IT. IF NOT... LET'S PROVE IT.
BUT WHAT DO WE DO? SAY, "HI THERE, THE AVENGERS WOULD LIKE TO JOIN UP?"
WE GET IN THROUGH YOU.
YOU'RE AN AVENGER, AFTER ALL --
-- IS IT SO HARD TO BELIEVE YOU TALKED ABOUT THE TRIUNE TEACHINGS, GOT US INTERESTED?
WELL, I DIDN'T -- DIDN'T WANT TO INTRUDE. BUT ANYWAY, WHAT WOULD A BUNCH OF WORLD-FAMOUS SUPER HEROES NEED WITH SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE?
ANYONE CAN BE IN NEED OF GUIDANCE. WARBIRD IS AN ALCOHOLIC, FOR INSTANCE. I HAVE LOST MY WIFE --
-- AND AM SEEKING NEW DIRECTION AND PURPOSE IN MY LIFE.
EVEN JACK, HERE, IS RECENTLY RETURNED TO EARTH, AND COULD BE CONFUSED AND OVERWHELMED BY HIS COSMIC EXPERIENCES.
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
YOU -- WANT ME TO GO?
NO -- IT WAS JUST AN EXAMPLE. I BELIEVE ONLY ONE OF US SHOULD GO, SO WE DO NOT UNDULY WEAKEN THE AVENGERS' ROSTER STRENGTH.
FURTHER, I THINK THAT I SHOULD GO --
-- MY ANDROID FORM IS SUITED TO OBSERVATION, ANALYSIS -- IF NECESSARY, ESCAPE --
-- AND BESIDES, I AM INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE TRIUNE FAITH. IT'S QUITE INTRIGUING.

JUST SO YOU DON'T GO BECOMING A CONVERT ON US, RED...
HEY!
TAXI'S HERE.
THAT'S OUR CUE!
JUST... ANOTHER MINUTE, DELROY, IF YOU WOULD. I WANT YOU TO KNOW -- THERE'S ANOTHER REASON I SUGGESTED ALL THIS.
I DO THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO, BUT ALSO -- I KNOW THERE'S BEEN SOME STRAIN BETWEEN YOU AND THE TEAM.
AND I THINK YOU'RE A GOOD GUY, AND I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP. I THINK LIKE AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, WHAT CAN I SAY?
BUT I HOPE IT TURNS OUT TO BE NOTHING. I REALLY DO.
WELL... THANKS, I GUESS --
-- BUT I GOTTA SAY, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE'S ASKED ME TO HELP SPY ON MY CHURCH TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.
HEY, YOU AND VIZH WANT TO JOIN US? DINNER, MAYBE HIT A FEW CLUBS...?
YOU KNOW...
"...THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN."
MINUTES LATER, FOUR AVENGERS LEAVE THE MANSION GROUNDS, LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EVENING OF BEING PEOPLE, NOT HEROES --
-- HUMAN BEINGS, NOT COSTUMED IDENTITIES. AND FROM ABOVE...
TAX

...A FIFTH AVENGER WATCHES THEM GO.
SIR? QUICK-SILVER?
HM? JARVIS?
I BROUGHT REFRESHMENTS, SIR.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE A SNACK.
THANK YOU. THAT'S VERY KIND.
I WAS JUST... COLLECTING MY THOUGHTS. WONDERING WHERE THE OTHERS WERE HEADED, IN SUCH A CONVIVIAL GROUPING.
YOU COULD JOIN THEM. I'M SURE THEY'D --
NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
I MIGHT DO SOME TRAINING IN THE COMBAT SIMULATION ROOM, THOUGH.
I FIND MYSELF WISHING... WISHING THE ALARMS WOULD GO OFF. THAT WE'D BE CALLED BACK INTO ACTION AGAIN.
SIR?
DURING BATTLE, AT LEAST, I KNOW WHO I AM -- WHAT MY ROLE IS. I DEPEND ON MY POWER, MY TRAINING, MY TACTICAL SKILL.
BUT AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD, WHAT AM I?
A FAILED HUSBAND. AN ABSENT FATHER.
REALLY, SIR. YOU'RE FAR MORE THAN --
THERE'S NO NEED TO MANUFACTURE COMPLIMENTS, JARVIS. I KNOW WHAT I AM.
I AM ARROGANT, QUICK-TEMPERED AND UNLIKABLE.
I KNOW THAT, AND I DON'T MIND. USUALLY, I DO NOT WISH TO BE LIKED -- AND I THINK I HAVE GOOD CAUSE TO BE ARROGANT.
IT'S JUST THAT SOMETIMES...
...SOMETIMES I WISH THE CALL TO BATTLE WOULD COME, THAT'S ALL...

WASHINGTON.
...AND ATTUMA'S SOLDIERS HAVEN'T RETURNED. WE'RE TOLD HE MAY BE HAVING SOME TROUBLE WITH PRINCE NAMOR.
LET'S HOPE SO.
FRANKLY, WE HAD HOPED THE AVENGERS COULD HAVE TAKEN THE FIGHT TO KANG, ENDED HIS THREAT, BUT...
BUT WE'VE BEEN DISTRACTED BY HIS MACHINATIONS AS WELL.
YES, QUITE SO.
WELL, IT'S NOT OVER YET, GENERAL McGINTY. WE'D BE MAKING PLANS TO ASSAULT KANG'S ORBITAL BASE RIGHT NOW --
-- IF WE HADN'T BEEN CALLED HERE.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO IMPUGN YOUR DEDICATION, MADAME WASP. I JUST MEANT...
WELL, WE'VE HAD TO MAKE BACKUP PLANS. THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT NOT TO THROW EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT AT IT.
AND ACCORDINGLY...
KLIK
...WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE NEXT STEP.

SENTINELS?!
YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS, GENERAL?
WE'RE NOT A JOKEY BUNCH AROUND HERE, MA'AM.
WE THINK THEY MAY BE ABLE TO PIERCE THE FORCE-FIELD AROUND KANG'S BASE. WE HAVE OVER 200 UNDER CONSTRUCTION --
-- WE'VE BOOSTED THEIR PLASMA BEAM OUTPUT, INCREASED THEIR SPEED --
GENERAL, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT -- THIS IS A BAD IDEA.
THE FIRST TIME THE SENTINELS WERE ACTIVATED, THEY TURNED ON THEIR CREATOR. THE SECOND TIME, THEY DID IT AGAIN.
MORE RECENTLY, THEY DEVASTATED MANHATTAN.
THEY'RE TOO RISKY -- THEY'RE JUST A BAD IDEA.
I'M NOT UNSYMPATHETIC, CAPTAIN. WE UNDERSTAND THERE'S A RISK, BUT WE FEEL IT'S A RISK WE'VE GOT TO TAKE.
THERE IS A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY, HOWEVER. THE FIRST FLIGHT OF SENTINELS WON'T BE READY FOR 96 HOURS.
IF THE AVENGERS CAN DEAL WITH KANG BEFORE THAT...
96 HOURS?
IF THAT'S ALL YOU CAN GIVE US, GENERAL -- WE'LL TAKE IT. AND I ASSURE YOU, SIR --
-- WE WILL FIND A WAY TO TAKE KANG DOWN.
THE WORDS ARE SAID CASUALLY, QUIETLY -- BUT STILL, THEY HAVE THE RING OF A SOLEMN OATH...

..AND...
HM?
WHAT IN -- ?
THIS ISN'T POSSIBLE! WE'RE REINFORCED -- EARTHQUAKE-PROOF -- !
BUT FOR ALL THAT, IT HAPPENS --
-- NOT JUST AT THE PENTAGON, BUT ACROSS THE RIVER IN WASHINGTON D.C. PROPER --
-- AS FAR NORTH AS CHEVY CHASE, AND AS FAR SOUTH AS ALEXANDRIA, THE GROUND HEAVES, BUCKLES --
-- AND THEN THRUSTING UP INTO THE SKY, LIKE SOME BIBLICAL BEHEMOTH'S GIGANTIC TEETH --
KROOM
KROOM

-- AND ON IT GOES -- MORE , EVER MORE--
KROOM
KSSH
-- GIANT STRUCTURES, FULLY HALF A MILE HIGH, AND A QUARTER-MILE THICK AT THE BASE --
-- AND MORE, AND STILL MORE --
OD'S BLOOD!
-- UNTIL FINALLY, WITH A FINAL, SHUDDERING SIGH --
-- THERE IS SILENCE.
FOR A MOMENT.
SIR! SIR!
THIS -- THIS STRUCTURE -- WHATEVER IT IS -- IT'S RINGING THE WHOLE CITY! ENTIRELY AROUND, IN ONE GREAT RING!
WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE IT CAME FROM -- THERE WAS NO WARNING WHATSOEVER!
SIR!
THERE ARE CALLS COMING IN! IT'S HAPPENING EVERYWHERE, SIR -- ALL OVER NORTH AMERICA!
BOSTON, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES, TORONTO --
WE'RE GETTING MORE AND MORE REPORTED EVERY MINUTE!
COULD THIS...
...COULD THIS BE KANG...?

HARDLY, MY DEAR. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT.
HUH?
MY APOLOGIES FOR THE UNORTHODOX INTRUSION -- BUT I WANTED TO SET YOUR MINDS AT EASE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
IT IS I WHO HAVE FORTIFIED THE CITIES OF NORTH AMERICA. AND I WHO WILL REPEL THE AGGRESSOR FROM OUR FAIR PLANET.
WHO -- ?
OH, DID I NEGLECT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF? ONCE AGAIN, MY APOLOGIES. YOU FAILED TO PROTECT THE WORLD -- SO I WAS FORCED TO STEP IN.
I AM, OF COURSE, THE MASTER OF THE WORLD --
-- AND ALL WHO LIVE ON IT, WHETHER THEY ARE AWARE OF ME OR NOT, ARE MY SUBJECTS, AND THUS UNDER MY PROTECTION --
-- NOW, AND FOREVERMORE!

NEAR LA ROCHE-SUR-YON, FRANCE.
THEY DROP FROM ORBIT AT IMPOSSIBLE SPEED, BY THE DOZENS, BY THE SCORE --
THEY DROP AND BRAKE SHARPLY, AND WARP OPEN --
-- TO DISGORGE THEIR CARGO.
A MERE FRAGMENT OF THE GREATEST ARMY KNOWN TO HUMAN HISTORY -- THE SCOURGES OF MORE WORLDS THAN ANY OF THEM CAN REMEMBER.
THEY ARE FEARED IN ENTIRE GALAXIES, AND VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN ON THIS WORLD. THEIR BIRTHWORLD. THEIR PAST.
THEY WILL NOT REMAIN UNKNOWN LONG.
THEY ARE THE SHOCK TROOPS OF KANG THE CONQUEROR. FIFTY THOUSAND STRONG. AS IF WITH ONE VOICE, THEY ROAR.
AS IF WITH ONE MIND, THEY CHARGE.
[redacted]

BUT THEY ARE NOT UNOPPOSED.
FRANCE'S DEFENDERS WAIT ON THESE FORTIFICATIONS, HASTILY BUILT LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, THESE PAST WEEKS.
THESE ARE THE STRONGEST, BEST-ARMED RAMPARTS IN ALL THE COUNTRY, AND HAVE BEEN MANNED AT GREAT SPEED, AS SOON AS THE INVASION SHIPS WERE DETECTED.
THE SOLDIERS AT THE WALLS ARE FRENCH, GERMAN, AUSTRIAN, SPANISH, ITALIAN AND MORE, FOR THIS IS NOT JUST FRANCE'S FIGHT, BUT THE WORLD'S.
FRANCE AND ENGLAND STAND TOGETHER AGAINST A COMMON FOE ONCE MORE.
AND LE PEREGRINE AND MICROMAX ARE NOT THE ONLY COSTUMED HEROES HERE TODAY.
THE AVENGERS STAND WITH THEM.
FIREBIRD. THOR.
THOR LOOKS... LIKE HE'S GOT A LOT ON HIS MIND, HERCULES.
BAH! 'TIS NOTHING, FAIR SHE-HULK. HE AWAITS ONLY THE CALL TO BATTLE --
-- AND THE JOY OF STRIVING 'GAINST THE FOE.
THE CALL COMES.
A L'ATTAQUE!
AND IN MOMENTS --

-- THE BATTLE IS JOINED.
THERE ARE OTHER FORCES KANG COULD HAVE BROUGHT TO BEAR. MORE DESTRUCTIVE, THAT CARRIED LESS RISK TO HIS MEN.
HE COULD HAVE ATTACKED ELSEWHERE, AS WELL.
BUT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN HIS WAY TO STRIKE WITH NUMBERS, WITH FORCE -- AND AT HIS ENEMY'S STRONGEST POINT.
THERE MUST BE A FACE TO THE INVASION. THERE MUST BE CONFIDENCE BROKEN, MIGHTY WALLS REDUCED TO RUBBLE.
AND VICTORY MUST BE PAID FOR WITH BLOOD. OR WHAT IS IT WORTH?

AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
A STAN LEE PRESENTATION FEATURING: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!
ABSOLUTE MASTERY
KURT BUSIEK WRITER MANUEL GARCIA & BOB LAYTON RESERVE ARTISTS
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.
KANG IS NOT THE ONLY THREAT THE WORLD FACES.
OVERNIGHT, THESE RING-WALLS -- HALF A MILE HIGH, A QUARTER-MILE THICK -- HAVE SPRUNG UP AROUND MOST OF THE MAJOR CITIES OF NORTH AMERICA.
THEY ARE THE WORK OF THE SELF-STYLED "MASTER OF THE WORLD," WHO CLAIMS TO BE DEFENDING HIS PROPERTY AGAINST KANG.
HE IS NOT BEING WELCOMED AS AN ALLY.
ANY LUCK, BLACK KNIGHT?
SURE, WARBIRD -- IF YOU CAN CALL FINALLY GETTING AN ACCESS PANEL TO OPEN AND STAY OPEN LUCK. I'M STARTING DIAGNOSTICS NOW --
-- BUT IT'S ANYONE'S GUESS HOW LONG IT'LL TAKE TO GET EVEN AN INKLING OF WHAT RUNS THIS THING...
OVERFLIGHT-3 TO AVENGERS --
-- WE'VE GOT A BOGEY, AND READOUTS SAY IT CAME FROM ORBIT. YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET UP HERE.
WARBIRD HERE -- AND ON MY WAY. LOOKS LIKE KANG'S CHECKING OUT THE NEW DÉCOR. YOU'VE GOT YOUR ORDERS, JOHNSON.
YES, MA'AM. TARGET ACQUIRED. I HAVE MISSILE-LOCK --
-- AND AM FIRING --
-- NOW!
KOOM
AND --
KOOM
NOT A SCRATCH!
THAT THING'S GOT A FORCE-FIELD AS GOOD AS THE ONE AROUND KANG'S ORBITAL BASE! NO WAY WE BREAK THROUGH -- !
HOWEVER, AS THEY CIRCLE THE HOVERING SENSOR-POD FOR ANOTHER ATTEMPT --
-- ONE OF THE RING-WALL'S TOWERS OPENS UP -- THE DEVICE WITHIN SWIVELS SMOOTHLY --

-- AND --
ZCHAMM
WHAT?!
UNBELIEVABLE!
AVENGERS MANSION, MANHATTAN.
...AND WHATEVER IT'S PACKING, IT'S IMPRESSIVE.
IT POPPED KANG'S FORCE-FIELD LIKE A SOAP-BUBBLE.
THANKS, WARBIRD. WONDER MAN?
NO GO, JAN.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO BUST UP THE LOS ANGELES RING-WALL ALL MORNING, AS REQUESTED --
-- BUT WHILE I CAN DAMAGE IT, IT JUST HEALS ITSELF SOMEHOW -- AS IF IT'S AS MUCH ORGANIC AS IT IS METAL. CAN'T GET A SAMPLE FOR ANALYSIS.
HOLLYWO
I DON'T LIKE THIS. I DON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT.
AS IF KANG WASN'T ENOUGH. ACCORDING TO DANE, AND TO ALPHA FLIGHT'S FILES ON THE MASTER, THAT'S ALIEN TECHNOLOGY --
-- BUT WHAT'S HE AFTER? WHY THE STORY ABOUT PROTECTION? WHY SO MANY CITIES?
PERHAPS, MADAME WASP, THIS IS A STROKE OF LUCK. AFTER ALL, THE DEFENSIVE WALLS SEEM ABLE TO DO WHAT THIS "MASTER" CLAIMED --
-- LEAVING THE CONTINENT WELL-PROTECTED FROM KANG.
IF THAT'S ALL HE WAS UP TO, IT'D BE FINE. BUT THERE'S MORE GOING ON.
WE'VE BEEN GETTING REPORTS ALL DAY...

"THE SAME SCENE, REPEATING ITSELF IN DOZENS OF GOVERNORS' OR MAYORS' OFFICES ACROSS THE CONTINENT."
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOIN' ON -- BUT I DON'T WANT TO SIT ON MY BUTT AND WAIT FOR THE FEDS!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THAT BLASTED WALL IS, AND NOW!
"WHATEVER WAS HAPPENING THIS MORNING --
"-- IT WAS INTERRUPTED --
"-- BY SOMETHING THAT LOOKED LIKE THE SAME TECHNOLOGY AS THE WALLS --
KSSH
"-- AND THEN WHAT CAME OUT OF IT -- !"
DELBERT! McCANNAN! IN HERE!
WE GOT A SITUATION!
ON IT, SIR!
THAT THING'S TOAST!
NO...
YOU WEAR BREATH-MASK... YOU COME WITH. YOUR PRESENCE...
...COMMANDED BY YOUR MASTER!
WAKK
"THEY WERE TAKEN -- SOME SORT OF BREATHING DEVICE CLAMPED OVER THEIR FACES, AND ABDUCTED.
"LUCKILY, STINGRAY WAS ON THE SCENE WHEN IT HAPPENED IN BOSTON, CONFERRING WITH OFFICIALS ABOUT THE WALL'S UNDERWATER EXTENT..."
...BY YOUR MASTER!
GOOD LORD!
STINGRAY TO WASP! EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION!

I'M IN PURSUIT OF A CREATURE...
...APPARENTLY AMPHIBIAN, APPARENTLY SENT BY THE MASTER!
IT HAS THE MAYOR OF BOSTON, AND IS ENTERING A WATER-FILLED TUNNEL. AM PURSUING, AND --
HM? I DON'T -- DON'T BELIEVE IT!
AS SOON AS IT HIT THE WATER, IT TOOK OFF LIKE A ROCKET! IT'S FAST --
-- INCREDIBLY FAST!
ONBOARD SENSORS CAN'T CLOCK ITS SPEED, BUT I'M BETTING IT'D LEAVE EVEN NAMOR IN ITS WAKE!
HMMM. STILL...
"THE CREATURE CHURNED UP THE WATER IN A MAJOR WAY. STINGRAY SET HIS SUIT'S SENSORS TO TRACK THE RIPPLE-EFFECT --
"-- AND SET OFF IN PURSUIT. WE'RE STILL WAITING TO HEAR BACK.
"BUT WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS, GOT TO BE READY TO MOVE. EXCUSE ME, JARVIS...
"...BUT I'VE GOT SOME CALLS TO MAKE."
BOSTON, HALF AN HOUR LATER.
QUINJET-ONE TO WARBIRD -- PREPARE FOR RENDEZVOUS.
OPENING ROOF HATCH NOW.
ACKNOWLEDGED, QUINJET-ONE. I AM IN POSITION...

...AND COMING ABOARD.
HOLA, WARBIRD.
SILVERCLAW.
QUICKSILVER.
YELLOWJACKET.
ANY OF YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
JUST PULL UP A CHAIR AND JOIN THE PARTY, W.B. OUR FEARLESS LEADER'S ON THE SQUAWK-BOX...
SORRY I WAS SO BRUSQUE IN SETTING THIS UP, CAROL -- BUT I HAD TO CONFERENCE WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL, AND CLEAR THIS.
THIS IS AN ESPIONAGE MISSION -- YOU'VE GOT THE MOST EXPERIENCE, SO YOU'RE IN CHARGE.
THE BLACK KNIGHT'S TRACED THE CONTROL SIGNAL TO THE RING-WALLS NORTH -- SOMEWHERE NEAR THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
THE LOCATOR-SIGNAL FROM STINGRAY IS HEADED THAT WAY, TOO. WE WANT YOU TO LINK UP WITH HIM, INFILTRATE THE MASTER'S BASE --
-- AND EITHER CONVINCE HIM TO PUT HIS ARMAMENT AT OUR SERVICE... OR TAKE CONTROL OF IT FROM HIM. EITHER WAY, WE NEED IT AGAINST KANG.
UNDERSTOOD. WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
I KNEW YOU WOULD. WASP OUT.
CAPTAIN AMERICA -- HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH YOUR SQUAD?
WE'RE ALMOST READY, JAN...

WASHINGTON, D.C. BOLLING AIR FORCE BASE.
...THE SCARLET WITCH, THE JACK OF HEARTS AND I STAND PREPARED FOR THE ASSAULT ON KANG'S BASE. AS FOR THE SHIP...
...TONY'S WORKING ON IT.
NO -- SECONDARY GRAV-GENERATORS IN COMPARTMENT FOUR! FOUR!
THE SHIP'LL BE READY, JAN.
BUT GETTING THROUGH KANG'S FORCE-FIELD --
-- I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'RE GOING TO DO THAT YET. HOPEFULLY, WE'LL HAVE MORE DATA SOON --
"-- ONCE PHOTON GETS BACK FROM HER RECON MISSION."
"I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND A WAY, TONY."
CAP, I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU HOW CRUCIAL THIS MISSION IS. IF WE CAN'T TAKE THE FIGHT TO KANG...
...THEN THE GOVERNMENT WILL LAUNCH THE SENTINELS, AND WE'LL HAVE THAT TO DEAL WITH TOO.
MAYBE NOT THE PROBLEM WE'RE FEARING, BUT I WON'T COUNT ON THAT...
CALLEYVILLE, TEXAS.
NOR IS THE AVENGERS' ATTENTION SOLELY ON KANG AND THE MASTER. FOR HERE, AT THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING --
-- THE SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION THE AVENGERS HAVE CLASHED WITH IN THE PAST --
...AND HERE, OUR OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER, WHERE WE HOLD PUBLIC FUNCTIONS, AND MORE...
-- TWO AVENGERS, OFFICIALLY ON LEAVE, HAVE ARRIVED TO INVESTIGATE.

AND MAY I SAY AGAIN HOW GOOD IT IS THAT EVEN AVENGERS ARE CAPABLE OF SEEKING OUT ENLIGHTENMENT --
-- AND THAT I HOPE THAT YOU FIND IT HERE, VISION.
IT... IS TRUE THAT I HAVE BEEN TROUBLED OF LATE, JONATHAN TREMONT... IN BOTH MIND AND HEART.
AND TRIATHLON HAS BEEN... GENEROUS IN ARRANGING TO BRING ME HERE.
OF COURSE, OF COURSE. DELROY HAS LONG BEEN ONE OF OUR MOST LOYAL AND CONSCIENTIOUS FOLLOWERS. BUT A MOMENT, IF YOU WOULD.
CELARDI, GUPTA -- PLEASE ARRANGE FOR GUEST-QUARTERS FOR THE VISION, AND AN ATTENDANT TO FAMILIARIZE HIM WITH OUR PROCEDURES...
I CONFESS, TRIATHLON, I AM OF TWO MINDS ABOUT THIS.
WE HAD AGREED NOT TO IGNORE CONCERNS HERE, AFTER REPORTS OF A SPACESHIP -- AND OF DANGER TO THE TRIUNE BELIEVERS. BUT PERHAPS --
-- WE SHOULD PUT IT OFF, UNTIL THE KANG CRISIS HAS --
LORD TREMONT! SIR! SIR!
THE GREAT THREAT -- THE TRIPLE-EVIL -- IT'S COMING! SENSITIVES HAVE REGISTERED ITS ARRIVAL IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM --
-- AND IT WILL REACH EARTH WITHIN DAYS!
ON THE OTHER HAND, VIZH OLD BUDDY -- MAYBE WE'D BETTER STAY...
AT THAT MOMENT...
COMMUNICATION INITIATED -- SPECIAL-STATUS AVENGER STINGRAY. LOCATION: NORTH OF TEHEK LAKE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, CANADA.
AREA-RESONANCE IMAGING ACTIVATED. LINK READY... NOW.
GO AHEAD, STINGRAY. WASP HERE.

I'VE SET THE A-RES UNIT FOR AN OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT --
-- AND I HOPE YOU'RE SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING --
-- BECAUSE I'VE FOUND THE BASE -- MADE MY WAY TO THE NERVE-CENTER --
-- AND TO THE MASTER HIMSELF!
GOOD, STINGRAY -- REAL GOOD. DON'T APPROACH HIM SOLO -- THERE'S BACKUP ON THE WAY.
IN THE MEANTIME, SCOUT THE AREA -- FIND OUT AS MUCH AS YOU CAN...
ALL RIGHT -- HE'S TALKING...
GOOD AFTERNOON, GENTLEMEN -- AND LADIES, OF COURSE. IN THE INTERESTS OF REPELLING KANG, I HAVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOU.
AMONG YOU, YOU REPRESENT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF MAJOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACROSS THE CONTINENT. I AM CIRCUMVENTING YOUR NOW-USELESS FEDERAL BRANCHES --
-- BUT I DO NEED TO MAINTAIN ORDER, TO MAINTAIN SOME TABLE OF ORGANIZATION, TO KEEP THE MACHINERIES OF SOCIETY RUNNING SMOOTHLY.
AND THAT MEANS YOU.
"INSTRUCTIONS?" WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE --
-- HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO GET AWAY WITH JUST... KIDNAPPING US LIKE THIS?!
WHO AM I, GOVERNOR DARRAS? IT IS QUITE SIMPLE.
I AM YOUR MASTER.

IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT YOU ARE UNAWARE OF MY EXISTENCE, SINCE I PREFER TO MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE. BUT NOW I MUST ACT.
AND YOU MUST KNOW FROM WHOM YOUR ORDERS COME. SO...
"FORTY THOUSAND YEARS AGO, I WAS AN IGNORANT HUMAN LIKE YOU, CARING FOR NOTHING BUT MY OWN WANTS AND NEEDS.
"CAST OUT BY MY TRIBE, I WAS DRAWN NORTH, EVER NORTH...
"...BY A CALL I COULD NEITHER UNDERSTAND NOR RESIST. FINALLY, I REACHED THE SOURCE OF THAT CALL. I APPROACHED, WARILY...
"...AND THE CRASHED STAR-SHIP REACHED OUT, AND DREW ME IN.
"WHAT FOLLOWED WAS SHEER AGONY, AS I WAS ANALYZED, STUDIED... AND DISSECTED. ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE MAN I WAS WAS MY BRAIN.
"BUT THAT BRAIN, PRESERVED BY THE SHIP, CONNECTED TO ITS SYSTEMS, EVENTUALLY ASSERTED ITS WILL, AND TOOK CONTROL.
"I RECREATED A BODY FOR MYSELF -- A GENETICALLY-PERFECT BODY I HAVE SINCE IMPROVED UPON...
"...AND NOW, THROUGH THIS HELMET, I CONTROL WHAT THIS SHIP HAS BECOME. A VAST COMPLEX STRETCHING BELOW THE ICE -- AND REACHING OUT IN AN INTRICATE WEB THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!"
THROUGH THIS BASE, I'M AWARE OF ALL THAT TRANSPIRES IN MY WORLD. THROUGH THIS BASE, I RULE FROM THE SHADOWS.
I WASTED SOME TIME IN BATTLES WITH SUPERHUMANS, BUT HAVE DECIDED OF LATE TO WORK MORE SUBTLY, TO ORDER THE WORLD AS I WISH IT --
-- WHETHER ITS PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF ME OR NOT.
TO THAT END, I HAVE DESTABILIZED HUMAN SOCIETY -- SEEN THAT THE WRONG PEOPLE GET ELECTED, THAT TENSIONS RISE, THAT DISASTERS STRIKE.
BECAUSE HUMANITY MUST BE CULLED. THE POPULATION MUST BE SMALLER, MUCH SMALLER... FOR THIS GLOBE TO SUPPORT IT IN COMFORT.

BUT WHILE KANG'S ASSAULT WILL *AID* IN THAT EFFORT, IT DOES ME LITTLE GOOD IF KANG ACTUALLY *WINS* THIS WAR.
AND SO I HAVE HAD TO STEP *FORWARD,* AND TAKE AN *ACTIVE* HAND.
"I HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF *DEFENDING* MY PROPERTY, DEFENDING THE *PLANET* --
"-- *OR* AT LEAST, *PART* OF IT.
"LET KANG STRIKE, WITH ALL HIS MIGHT. HE WILL NOT GAIN A *TOEHOLD* ON NORTH AMERICA.
"BUT FOR THE REST, I AM CONTENT TO LET HIS WAR *RAGE.* I WILL GUIDE IT, *CHOREOGRAPH* IT...
"...AND ALLOW IT TO KILL OFF *MILLIONS,* IF NOT *BILLIONS* OF EXCESS HUMANITY, MUCH AS THE *ICE AGE* OF MY BIRTH-ERA PERFORMED A CLEANSING OF ITS *OWN.*
"THEN, AND *ONLY* THEN, SHALL I TURN MY MIGHT TO KANG... AND *CRUSH* HIM UTTERLY.
THE RESULT WILL BE A *BETTER* WORLD. A *SCARRED* WORLD, PERHAPS, NEEDING *CENTURIES* TO RECOVER.
BUT WHAT OF IT? I AM IMMORTAL. I HAVE *TIME.*
YOU -- YOU'RE INSANE!
YOU'RE A TOTAL RAVING *LUNATIC!*

AH YES. THE BRAY OF THE STUPID AND TERRIFIED.
BUT TO BUSINESS. YOU WILL EACH BE FITTED WITH CONTROL TECHNOLOGY AND RELEASED -- RETURNED TO YOUR OFFICES WITH INSTRUCTIONS...
...AND WITH ENOUGH CONTROL DISCS TO RECRUIT OTHERS INTO MY NEW ORDER. AND RATHER THAN KEEP YOU IN SUSPENSE, I INFORM YOU NOW...
"...THE PROCESS IS QUITE PAINFUL..."
DAMOCLES BASE. EARTH ORBIT.
ASSAULT UPDATE DELTA-NINE.
BATTLE REACHES STAGE FOUR TWO MINUTES, SEVEN SECONDS BEHIND SCHEDULE.
BEACHHEAD FIRMLY ESTABLISHED. HEAVIER WEAPONRY BEING SHUTTLED DOWN.
CASUALTIES 62% OF EXPECTED LEVEL.
INDIGENOUS FORCES BEING FORCED BACK AS EXPECTED. RESISTANCE STRONGEST FROM SUPERHUMANS --
-- NOTABLY THOSE IDENTIFIED AS "THOR" AND "HERCULES."
CURRENT DEPLOYMENT PATTERNS AS FOLLOWS...
THE BATTLE IS GOING WELL.
AND WHY SHOULD IT NOT? ALL CONTINGENCIES HAVE BEEN PLANNED FOR, ALL FORCES PERFORM THEIR ASSIGNED TASKS EFFICIENTLY.
THERE ARE NO SURPRISES, AND HE DOES NOT EXPECT ANY.
THE SCARLET CENTURION WATCHES, AND GROWS IMPATIENT. HE IS NOMINALLY IN COMMAND OF THE INVASION, BUT HE IS NOT NEEDED HERE.
IT WOULD PROCEED AS SMOOTHLY WITHOUT HIM.
THE SCREENS BEFORE HIM SHIMMER AND CHANGE.
CHANGE VISI-DISPLAY. SHOW PROGRAM THREE, S.C. PERSONAL.

TIME PASSES. A FEW MINUTES, PERHAPS.
AND THEN, WITH A HYDRAULIC HISS...
GOOD DAY, MY SON.
I SAW YOUR COMBAT EXERCISE TAPES FROM THIS MORNING. FINE WORK.
THANK YOU.
FATHER, THAT CHAMBER -- YOU SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME THERE, BUT I HAVE NEVER BEEN INSIDE IT. WHAT DOES IT HOLD?
NOTHING OF IMPORTANCE. DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH IT.
HOW GOES THE ASSAULT?
IT GOES AS WELL AS EXPECTED, SIR. ALL UNITS PERFORMING AS COMMANDED.
BUT I ITCH FOR MORE THAN THIS -- TO BE INVOLVED IN THE THICK OF IT, TO TAKE PART.
THERE WILL BE A TIME FOR THAT, MARCUS. BUT WE MUST NOT WASTE IT.
WE MUST MAKE OUR PRESENCE FELT AT THE MOMENT OF GREATEST EFFECT.
BESIDES, I THINK I KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU TRULY ITCH FOR, EH?
DO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME WITH THOUGHTS OF WOMEN NOW, MY SON. TIME TO HAVE ANY WOMAN YOU CHOOSE AFTER THE VICTORY IS WON, HEY?
IN THE MEANTIME, FOCUS ON THE BATTLE. BE AS BOLD AND FEARLESS AS YOUR FATHER...
...AND THERE IS NOTHING IN THE UNIVERSE THAT WILL BE DENIED YOU.
...YES, SIRE.

KEEWATIN REGION, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES. CANADA.
"THAT'S THE CENTER OF IT, UNDER THE ICE. IT EXTENDS OUT FOR MILES.
"MICRO-THERMAL RESONANCE SHOWS THE PARTS NEAREST THE SURFACE. WE'LL BE MAKING FOR THE NEAREST OF THOSE. ALL RIGHT, AVENGERS...
...LET'S GO!
THEY LEAVE THE WARMTH OF THE QUINJET, THEIR INSULATED UNIFORMS PROVIDING ONLY PARTIAL PROTECTION FROM THE BITTER COLD.
AND EACH, IN THEIR OWN WAY, MAKES SWIFT TIME ACROSS THE ICE AND SNOW, UNTIL...
THERE! SHIFTING ICE MUST HAVE CRACKED IT OPEN -- PRACTICALLY RIPPED THE DOOR OFF ITS HINGES.
SO LET'S HEAD IN. THE JAMMING FIELD SHOULD SHIELD US FROM DETECTION, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE --
-- AND THE HAND-HELD SCANNERS SHOULD LEAD US TO STINGRAY.
JUST REMEMBER, ALL OF YOU. IF WE'RE ATTACKED, THE GOAL ISN'T TO BEAT THE FOE, BUT TO GET PAST IT --
-- TO REACH THE CENTER OF THIS BASE AND TAKE CONTROL, AT ALL COSTS.
ONLY A HALF A MILE IN, HOWEVER, AND --
EH?
THAT SUDDEN LIGHT!
WHAT CAUSED --

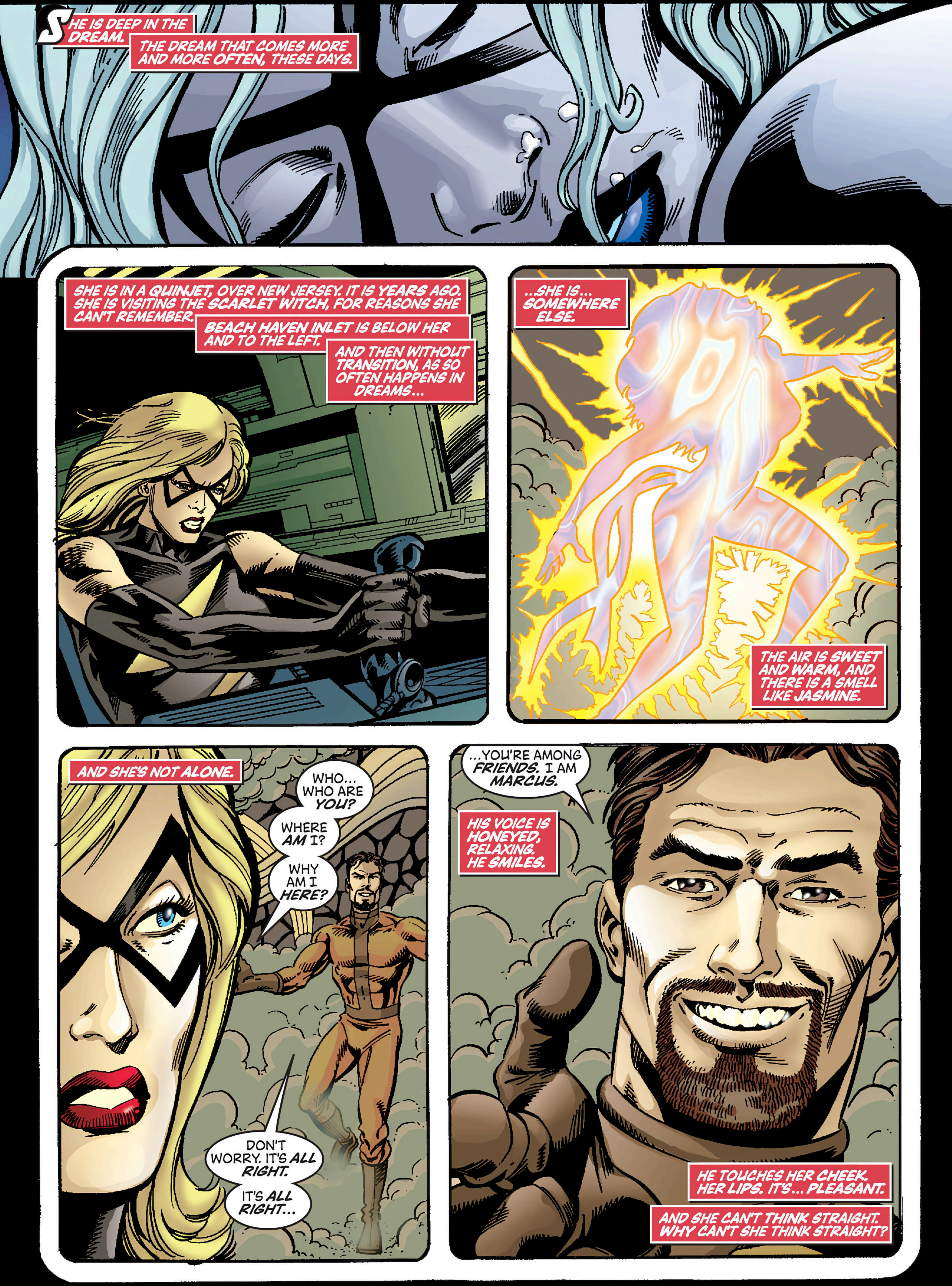
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HAHAHA
LOOK! POPPING OUT OF THE WALLS -- !
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD HIDE FROM ME, AVENGERS?
IN MY OWN BASE?
AN EXTENSION OF MY VERY SELF?
I SENSED YOU FROM THE MOMENT YOU APPROACHED! I OPENED THE WAY TO YOU! AND MORE --
-- I ARRANGED A WELCOME FOR YOU!
THEY THUNDER FORWARD, MOVING AS FLUIDLY AS LIONS -- BUT MORE SWIFTLY, MORE POWERFULLY THAN ANY LAND-CREATURE THE AVENGERS CAN IMAGINE --
AND WITHOUT SLOWING, THEY LEAP --
QUICKSILVER, MOVE! FLANK LEFT!
BUT --
I SAID MOVE!
THESE THINGS ARE HELLACIOUSLY FAST IN WATER, QUICKSILVER -- I DON'T KNOW HOW FAST THEY ARE ON LAND, BUT =NNH= AS POWERFUL AS THEY ARE --
MASTER SAY KILL, INTRUDER! SO YOU D -- HLKK!

SHAMM
-- I WANT SOMEONE ON THE OUTSIDE --
-- DON'T WANT TO LET THEM SURROUND US!
GET... BACK!
PLAM
UH?
-- AND I SHALL SWEEP YOU FROM DANGER!
A WISE CHOICE, IT SEEMS. FOR I'M IN POSITION TO OBSERVE, AND --
SILVERCLAW! SHIFT TO YOUR HUMAN FORM, NOW --
A WORD OF ADVICE, LITTLE ONE -- PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT IS AROUND YOU, NOT JUST WHAT IS BEFORE YOU.
YOU REMIND ME TOO MUCH OF ANOTHER, AT YOUR AGE, FOR ME TO WANT TO SEE YOU INJURED.
THERE, FIDO! BITE DOWN, AND THE FEEDBACK SHOCK'LL KNOCK YOU --
WHOA, MAMA!
WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE!
I'VE BEEN PREFERRING TO FIGHT AT FULL-SIZE THESE DAYS, BUT LUCKY FOR ME, I CAN STILL SHRINK DOWN ITTY-BITTY --
-- ALL THE BETTER TO AVOID BEING LUNCH!

THEY DON'T LIKE OUR BOLTS, W.B.! WE CAN --
NO! SCATTER, ALL OF YOU! SPLIT UP, AND GO -- I'LL HOLD THEM HERE!
REMEMBER THE MISSION!
OKAY! JUST DON'T GET EATEN!
JANNIE'D BE SO TICKED WITH US -- !
ENOUGH, PYM. JUST GO.
OKAY, OKAY!
YOU GO LEFT, SHE'LL GO RIGHT -- AND I'LL POP THROUGH THE VENT-GRATE UP THERE...
ALL RIGHT, CREATURES. YOU WANT PAST ME --
-- YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IT THROUGH A FEW TONS OF SCRAP METAL FIRST!
SKRAMM
URH?
NO..!
VERY RESOURCEFUL, WARBIRD. YOU HAVE STYMIED MY PLODEX WOLVES.
BUT MY BASE IS VAST, WOMAN -- EXTENDING IN BRANCHES AND NODULES UNDER ALL THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.
DO YOU THINK THAT THE SMALL PART YOU AND YOUR FELLOWS OCCUPY NOW --

"-- CAN'T BE SACRIFICED WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION?"
WHKROMM!
AND FOR LONG MOMENTS, THERE IS NO SOUND FOR MILES BUT THE ROLLING ECHO OF THE BLAST...
WASHINGTON D.C.
PHOTON! YOU'RE BACK! ANY LUCK?
I'M SORRY, MR. STARK...
...BUT I COULDN'T ANALYZE THE FORCE-FIELD. IT'S JUST TOO FAR BEYOND ANYTHING I CAN VISUALIZE.
I DID, HOWEVER...
...MANAGE TO ABSORB A BIT OF IT. IF I CAN SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFER IT...
GREAT -- I'LL RUN A FULL BATTERY OF TESTS, PRONTO.
WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THAT, TONY -- OUR TIME'S RUNNING SHORT. EVERYONE ABOARD SHIP!
YOU'LL HAVE TO SEND US THE TEST RESULTS ONCE WE'VE REACHED ORBIT.

YOU KNOW I WISH I COULD COME ALONG, CAP...
I KNOW, TONY. BUT RIGHT NOW, WE NEED TONY STARK'S BRAINS --
-- MORE THAN IRON MAN'S STRENGTH.
I KNOW. BUT --
VVMP
WHAT--?
THIS IS AN AUTOMATIC NOTICE.
MY BASE'S EXTERIOR SHIELDS HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH -- AND PHASIO-TELEMETRY TRACES THE CULPRIT TO THIS LOCATION.
BE WARNED, AS I HAVE STATED BEFORE --
-- THAT ANY ATTACK ON MY BASE OR MY PERSON WILL BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO CIRCUMVENT THE FIELD OF BATTLE.
REPERCUSSIONS WILL BE SWIFT -- AND THOROUGH.
WITH THAT, THE HOLOGRAM VANISHES, AS SWIFTLY AS IT HAD APPEARED.
AND, MINUTES LATER...
CAP, WHAT HE SAID -- HE'S NOT BLUFFING...
I KNOW, JACK OF HEARTS. BUT THE WORLD'S COUNTING ON US. WE HAVE NO CHOICE. SO WE FIGHT -- AND WE WIN.
THERE ARE NO OTHER OPTIONS.


SHE IS DEEP IN THE DREAM.
THE DREAM THAT COMES MORE AND MORE OFTEN, THESE DAYS.
SHE IS IN A QUINJET, OVER NEW JERSEY. IT IS YEARS AGO. SHE IS VISITING THE SCARLET WITCH, FOR REASONS SHE CAN'T REMEMBER.
BEACH HAVEN INLET IS BELOW HER AND TO THE LEFT.
AND THEN WITHOUT TRANSITION, AS SO OFTEN HAPPENS IN DREAMS...
...SHE IS... SOMEWHERE ELSE.
THE AIR IS SWEET AND WARM, AND THERE IS A SMELL LIKE JASMINE.
AND SHE'S NOT ALONE.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
WHERE AM I?
WHY AM I HERE?
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT'S ALL RIGHT...
...YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS. I AM MARCUS.
HIS VOICE IS HONEYED, RELAXING. HE SMILES.
HE TOUCHES HER CHEEK. HER LIPS. IT'S... PLEASANT.
AND SHE CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT. WHY CAN'T SHE THINK STRAIGHT?

MARIE ANTOINETTE (NO, REALLY!) SHOWS HER GOWNS. HELPS HER SELECT THE FINEST, AND TO DRESS.
AND SHE WANTS TO GIGGLE...
...TO ASK MARIE WHY SHE STILL HAS HER HEAD ON. BUT SHE DOESN'T.
AND THERE'S MUSIC... HAUNTING AND BEAUTIFUL...
...MELTING HER HEART...
AND THEN THERE'S MARCUS AGAIN. AND SHE'S NERVOUS, WARY -- BUT HE KEEPS REPEATING, IN THAT SOOTHING VOICE...
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
AND IT IS.
HE IS THE SON OF IMMORTUS, WHO IS IN TURN A FUTURE INCARNATION OF THE TIME-TRAVELLING KANG THE CONQUEROR. HE WAS BORN IN LIMBO.
AND HE WAS STRANDED THERE WHEN HIS FATHER VANISHED. SO ALONE. SO LONELY.
BUT NOW HE HAS HER. HE BROUGHT HER HERE TO HIM. ALL HE HAS DONE, HE HAS DONE FOR HER.
AND HIS TOUCH IS SO GENTLE, THRILLING HER TO HER HEART, TO HER SOUL.
AND SHE CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT.
AND SHE WANTS TO SHOUT -- TO TELL HERSELF IT'S A TRAP, THAT HE'S CONTROLLING HER MIND --
-- BUT SHE CAN'T MAKE A SOUND --

AND THEN SHE'S IN A HOSPITAL IN NEW JERSEY, SIX MONTHS PREGNANT OVERNIGHT, AND SHE CAN'T REMEMBER WHY...
DON'T WORRY, CAROL. YOU'RE AN AVENGER...
...AND THAT MAKES YOU A VERY SPECIAL PERSON, WITH VERY SPECIAL FRIENDS. FRIENDS WHO'LL STAND BY YOU...
...NO MATTER WHAT.
AND THEN SHE'S AT AVENGERS MANSION...
...AND SHE'S GIVING BIRTH...
AND THE BABY IS MARCUS, REBORN INTO THE REAL WORLD.
HE GROWS FAST... FROM INFANT TO CHILD, FROM CHILD TO ADULT... IN ONLY A FEW HOURS.
BUT HIS PRESENCE... A CHILD OF LIMBO IN THE REAL WORLD... CAUSES DISRUPTIONS, WARPS IN TIME, ENDANGERING ALL.
HE TRIES TO STOP THE DAMAGE. HE FAILS.
AND HE MUST RETURN TO LIMBO...
...OR HE WILL DIE.
AND SHE KNOWS WHAT'S COMING NEXT IN THE DREAM --
-- AND SHE TENSES -- SHE WANTS TO CRY, TO FIGHT, TO RUN --
-- BUT SHE CAN'T STOP IT--

I'LL GO. PERHAPS I WAS DESTINED TO BE ALONE.
NO, MARCUS. YOU WON'T BE ALONE. SOME OF WHAT I FELT FOR YOU IN LIMBO... STILL LINGERS. I FEEL CLOSER TO YOU THAN I'VE FELT TO ANYONE.
SO I'M RETURNING TO LIMBO WITH YOU.
AND THEY GO. SHE IS SO HAPPY, ON THE OUTSIDE. AND THAT'S ALL THE AVENGERS CAN SEE, ALL THEY CAN HEAR.
THEY HELP HER GO, AND WISH HER THE BEST...
...AND SHE CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT.
AND MARCUS...
...MARCUS AGES, GROWING YEARS OLDER IN ONLY DAYS. AN IRREGULARITY IN HIS CONNECTION TO THE RHYTHMS OF LIMBO.
WITHIN A WEEK, HE'S DEAD. HE'S DEAD...
MARCUS!
...AND SHE CAN THINK STRAIGHT ONCE MORE.
AND SHE KNOWS... KNOWS HOW HE USED HIS FATHER'S TECHNOLOGY TO SUBTLY AFFECT HER. TO MAKE HER... FALL IN LOVE.
SHE FEELS HOLLOW, AND USED, AND VIOLATED. AND SCARED. AND ANGRY. AND FRIENDLESS. AND ALONE.
AND SHE LEARNS ENOUGH OF IMMORTUS' TECHNOLOGY TO LEAVE LIMBO, TO RETURN TO EARTH.
AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER, SHE IS ATTACKED. HER POWERS, HER MEMORY, HER IDENTITY... ALL ARE STOLEN FROM HER.
AND WHILE SHE GETS NEW POWERS, AND EVEN GETS HER MEMORIES BACK, IN TIME, SHE HAS LITTLE OR NO EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO MOST OF THEM.
NOT THIS MEMORY, THOUGH. THIS ONE, SHE GETS BACK IN FULL...

THIS ONE WILL STAY WITH HER FOREVER.
DEEP IN CANADA'S NORTHERN TERRITORIES. ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS AN AVENGERS SPOTLIGHT ON WARBIRD!
HER NAME IS CAROL SUSAN JANE DANVERS. U.S.A.F., RETIRED. A.K.A. WARBIRD OF THE AVENGERS.
IN THE HEART OF BATTLE
THE WORLD IS AT WAR. EVEN NOW, THE TROOPS OF KANG THE CONQUEROR SWEEP THROUGH EUROPE, FORCING ITS DEFENDERS RELENTLESSLY BACK.
WARBIRD WAS SENT NORTH, WITH A SPECIALLY PICKED SQUAD OF AVENGERS, TO WREST TECHNOLOGY AWAY FROM ANOTHER MEGALOMANIAC, THE SELF-STYLED MASTER OF THE WORLD --
-- TECHNOLOGY THAT COULD PROTECT THE WORLD, POSSIBLY EVEN ROUT KANG AND HIS ARMIES. BUT THE MASTER BLEW UP A SECTION OF HIS HEADQUARTERS TO STOP THE AVENGERS. WARBIRD WAS CAUGHT IN THE BLAST.
AND NOW SHE DREAMS FITFUL DREAMS, IN THE ICY COLD.
KURT BUSIEK WRITER MANUEL GARCIA & BOB LAYTON RESERVE ARTISTS
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
SUMERAK & YOUNGQUIST ASSISTANT EDITORS TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

THE PLODEX WOLVES APPROACH CAUTIOUSLY.
THIS IS ONE OF THE SOFT ONES. THE ONES THEIR MASTER ORDERED THEM TO CHASE, TO FIGHT, TO REND. BUT THIS ONE DOES NOT FIGHT, AND DOES NOT RUN.
IS IT DEAD?
THE POD LEADER LEANS CLOSE, TO SMELL IT, TO SEE IF IT BREATHES.
?
SHRAK
ZAK
AAAHH!
GET BACK -- GET AWAY!
MY BLASTS -- NOWHERE NEAR AS STRONG AS THEY SHOULD BE! WHY...?
AND COLD, SO COLD...
OH, GOD -- HOW LONG WAS I OUT? MY BODY'S BEEN DRAWING ON MY STORED ENERGY -- USING IT TO KEEP ME FROM FREEZING TO DEATH.
I'M ALMOST DRAINED -- ALMOST POWERLESS!

I'M IN NO SHAPE TO FIGHT THE MASTER'S ALIEN SEA-WOLVES -- NOT NOW, NOT LIKE THIS. I WOULDN'T LAST TEN SECONDS.
GOT TO GET AWAY --
uRH?
-- FIND SOMEWHERE SAFE -- SOMEPLACE DEFENSIBLE!
THERE SHE GO, THERE!
WE GET. WE GET!
THIS'LL DO -- BUT NOT FOR LONG.
BACK WHEN I CHANNELED THE POWER OF A WHITE-HOLE STAR, THIS'D HAVE BEEN NO PROBLEM -- I NEVER RAN OUT OF ENERGY. BUT NOW...
...I MAY WELL DIE HERE. I NEED SOMETHING-- SOME KIND OF POWER SOURCE TO CHARGE UP FROM --
-- AND THERE'S NOTHING IN --
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MILADY WARBIRD?
WHAT?! WHO --?!

"IT'S HIM", HER MIND SCREAMS. "HIM!"
NO -- NO --
THE SCARLET CENTURION, HE CALLS HIMSELF. BUT SHE'S HEARD HIS VOICE -- SEEN HIS EYES!
HE SAYS HE'S KANG'S SON -- AND KANG AND IMMORTUS, THEY'RE THE SAME MAN, IN ALL THAT MATTERS. THAT MAKE'S HIM MARCUS!
MARCUS!
EH --?!
HER MIND GOES WHITE.
SHRAMM
YOU WON'T FIND ME SUCH EASY PREY THIS TIME, MONSTER!
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE -- WHAT YOU ARE --
-- AND BY HALA, YOU WON'T GET AWAY THIS TIME!
MILADY, WHAT --?!
EVEN IF HE'D BEEN READY FOR HER ATTACK, HE WOULDN'T HAVE STOOD A CHANCE. SHE'S OPERATING ON PURE REFLEX --
-- DRAWING ON GENETICALLY-PROGRAMMED COMBAT SKILLS.
HER FIRST BLOW SHATTERS HIS HELMET.
HER SECOND CRACKS HIS CHESTPLATE.
KRAK
WRAK
KUDDWHDD
AND THEN SHE'S ON HIM, JUST BATTERING -- BATTERING --

-- UNTIL --
ENOUGH!
FRAMMM
PEACE!
I DID NOT COME HERE TO ATTACK -- DID NOT COME HERE TO FIGHT!
THOUGH I MUST COMMEND YOUR EFFICIENCY. YOU NOT ONLY DESTROYED MY AERO-SKIFF -- BUT MY INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS GEAR AS WELL.
IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE MY ARMOR'S SELF-REPAIRING CIRCUITS ALLOW ME TO CONTACT DAMOCLES BASE --
-- ARRANGE FOR RETRIEVAL.
YEAH, AND I'M ALL BROKEN UP ABOUT IT.
YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T HERE TO ATTACK. WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR, THEN? IN CASE IT SLIPPED YOUR MIND, WE'RE ENEMIES.
I KNOW.
BUT I CANNOT HELP IT. YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR BEAUTY, YOUR MAGNIFICENT INNER FIRE --
-- I HAVE BEEN HOPELESSLY ENCHANTED SINCE FIRST I LAID EYES ON YOU, AT YOUR UNITED NATIONS PLAZA.
I HAVE OBSERVED YOU -- YOUR SUBSEQUENT BATTLES -- FROM DAMOCLES BASE. AND WHEN I SAW YOU IN SUCH DIRE STRAITS --
-- I SIMPLY COULD NOT LEAVE YOU TO DIE.
I HAD TO COME AND OFFER MY ASSISTANCE.

WHAT... KIND OF ASSISTANCE?
WHATEVER IS WITHIN MY POWER TO GIVE.
YOU ABSORB ENERGY TO FUEL YOUR SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES, DO YOU NOT?
HERE, GRASP MY HALBERD -- AND REPLENISH YOUR POWER-STORES.
POWER UP -- FROM THAT?
OKAY...
...BUT DON'T MAKE ANY SUDDEN...
HE SMILES -- KINDLY, GENTLY --
-- AND --
NO --!
EH?
OH, I'LL JUST BET YOU'D LIKE ME TO GRASP YOUR HALBERD, PAL. WHAT IS IT -- THE MIND-CONTROL TECHNOLOGY'S IN THERE --
-- SO YOU CAN TAKE ME OVER AGAIN, LIKE YOU DID BEFORE...?
I... I DO NOT UNDERSTAND...
SURE YOU DON'T... MARCUS!
MILADY, I ASSURE YOU -- I MEAN YOU NO HARM. I AM NOT HERE TO FORCE YOU INTO ANYTHING UNWELCOME.
STILL, IF YOU WILL NOT ALLOW ME TO LOAN YOU MY POWER, I TRUST THAT I WILL AT LEAST BE ALLOWED --
-- TO PROVIDE WARMTH.
FROMM

SOMETIME LATER...
THEY HUDDLE AROUND THE FIRE IN SILENCE, UNTIL...
I HAVE ACCESSED MY FATHER'S INTELLIGENCE FILES ON YOU, MILADY, AND I BELIEVE I KNOW THE "MARCUS" OF WHOM YOU SPEAK.
BUT THOUGH MY NAME, TOO, IS MARCUS, I ASSURE YOU --
-- I AM NOT THAT MAN.
I AM THE SON OF KANG, NOT OF IMMORTUS. BORN IN A DIFFERENT PLACE, AT A DIFFERENT TIME, OF A DIFFERENT MOTHER.
WITH A DIFFERENT PAST, A DIFFERENT UPBRINGING.
MY FATHER AND IMMORTUS ARE TEMPORAL DOUBLES, OF A SORT -- IS IT SO HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR GENETICS WOULD PRODUCE SIMILAR-LOOKING SONS?
OR THAT THERE WOULD BE SOMETHING IN THEIR SHARED PAST THAT WOULD LEAD THEM BOTH TO NAME THOSE SONS MARCUS?
"YOU ARE WARY -- SUSPICIOUS. I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT. BUT UNLIKE THAT OTHER MARCUS -- I KNOW THE VALUE OF HONOR.
"IT WAS MY FATHER WHO TAUGHT IT TO ME."
YOU MUST BE BOLD, MY SON -- BOLD AND INDEPENDENT, AS I HAVE BEEN. YOU MUST THINK FOR YOURSELF, MAKE YOUR CHOICES AND SEIZE THEM --
-- BUT DO SO AS A MAN, WITH A MAN'S UNSULLIED HONOR. A BATTLE HONESTLY LOST IS NO DISGRACE --
-- BUT A BATTLE WON THROUGH TREACHERY IS A STAIN THAT CAN NEVER BE CLEANSED.
"I LEARNED TO BE A WARRIOR -- AND LEARNED THE WARRIOR'S WAY. I WILL FIGHT FOR WHAT I WANT, YES -- BUT OPENLY, HONESTLY.
"OR I DO NOT DESERVE TO WIN IT."

I'M NOT SO SURE KANG'S THE NOBLE WARRIOR YOU THINK HE IS. BUT STILL, FOR ALL THAT WHAT YOU SAY SOUNDS GOOD --
-- I CAN'T TAKE THE RISK THAT YOU'RE LYING.
I AM IMPRESSED ONCE AGAIN. HERE WE ARE, NEAR DEATH IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT -- AND YOU'D DIE RATHER THAN LOSE YOUR FREEDOM.
I KNOW I AM NO THREAT TO YOU, BUT YOU DO NOT -- SO YOU MUST TREAT THE THREAT AS REAL. VERY WELL. I SHALL ACCEPT YOUR WISHES.
BUT AT LEAST --
"-- LET ME HELP YOU REACH YOUR GOAL."
THE CENTURION HAD SPOTTED AN OUTCROPPING OF THE MASTER'S BASE AS HE APPROACHED FROM THE AIR.
CONSERVING WHAT LITTLE REMAINS OF WARBIRD'S POWER, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY OVER THE ICEFALL, AVOIDING THE PLODEX WOLVES, UNTIL...
THERE!
AND I SENSE A HOLLOW SPACE BELOW US, COMING CLOSEST TO THE SURFACE --
-- HERE!
FRAKAMM
NOT BAD. NOT BAD AT ALL.
WITH ANY LUCK, HE'S NOT SCANNING FOR US, SO HE WON'T KNOW WE'RE HERE --
-- BUT THERE'S BOUND TO BE A POWER SOURCE I CAN USE TO --

-- WHOA!
IT LOOKS -- LIKE A GENETIC ENGINEERING LABORATORY OF SOME SORT.
THESE CREATURES -- THEY RESEMBLE THOSE YOU CALLED THE SEA-WOLVES, BUT THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT --
-- AS IF INTENDED FOR OTHER ENVIRONMENTS.
RIGHT ON THE MONEY, I'D SAY.
ALPHA FLIGHT'S FILES ON THE MASTER SAID HE WANTED TO CREATE CREATURES LIKE THIS -- BUT DIDN'T HAVE THE GENETIC RAW MATERIAL HE NEEDED.
HE WAS AFTER ONE OF THEM -- MARRINA -- BUT I HEARD SHE DIED.
I WONDER HOW HE MANAGED IT? HERE -- LET'S TAKE A LOOK AROUND.
BUT AS THE DOOR BEFORE THEM SLIDES NOISELESSLY OPEN --
HALT WHERE YOU ARE, INTRUDERS!
UH-OH --
-- LOOKS LIKE WE DIDN'T GET IN UNNOTICED...
AND BEHIND HER, THE DOOR SLIDES SHUT ONCE MORE...
SURRENDER, INTRUDERS...OR THE MASTER DECREES...
...YOU DIE!

QUICKLY, WARBIRD -- YOU MUST POWER YOURSELF UP! IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL AGAINST THEM!
DO IT!
NO! I -- I CAN'T -- !
YOU NOT SURRENDER, INTRUDERS! SO STANDING ORDERS APPLY!
FIRE!
POOM POOM POOM
CENTURION, DON'T -- !
BLAST IT!
IF YOU WON'T PROTECT YOURSELF --
-- I WILL!

FAM FAM FAM FAM FAM
U-UHHH!
CENTURION!
DAMMIT -- I DIDN'T ASK HIM TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR ME -- BUT I CAN'T LET THE ACT GO TO WASTE, EITHER!
THOSE ARE SOME SORT OF PLASMA-PACKET PROJECTILE WEAPONS, SO THEY'D PROBABLY RIP ME TO RIBBONS --
-- BUT IF I LET THEM FOCUS ON HIM, THEN VAULT OVER THE BLASTS --
THAT'S A BRAVE MAN YOU JUST GUNNED DOWN, UGLOIDS -- WHATEVER ELSE I THINK, I'VE GOT TO GIVE HIM THAT!
WRAK
KRAK
AND HE CAME ALONE, SO HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY OF HIS PEOPLE AROUND TO STAND UP FOR HIM -- SO I GUESS IT'S UP TO ME --
-- TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID!
KRAK
THAT'S ONE -- TWO -- THREE DOWN --

WRUD
-- AND BABY MAKES FOUR!
ITS WEAPON PROJECTILES ARE USELESS TO ME --
-- BUT IT USES SOME SORT OF POWER PACK, AND --
KRCHH
AHH! THAT'LL CHARGE ME UP FOR AT LEAST A FEW MINUTES --!
AND THE CENTURION -- I STILL CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO TOUCH HIM, BUT...
ARE... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I WILL... HEAL, WARBIRD. DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH ME.
BUT TRULY... EVEN WITHOUT POWER, YOU ARE MAJESTIC...
?
POOM
WHOA! ONE OF 'EM'S STILL AWAKE! MOVE IT, BIG GUY!
SHE REACTS WITHOUT THINKING --
-- AND THE SHOT MISSES ITS TARGET, TRAVELING THE LENGTH OF THE CORRIDOR, AND --
PKSSH
AND BEFORE THE ECHO OF SHATTERING STEEL FADES --

-- CHAOS ERUPTS!
THERE IS WIND, VACUUM -- AND AN AGONIZING SCREAM OF PAIN AND RAGE, IN BOTH THEIR EARS AND MINDS --
WHUHH!
CENTURION! HOLD ON!
BUT INJURED, HE CAN'T --
-- AND HE FINDS HIMSELF TUMBLING INEXORABLY TOWARD THE SHATTERED BULKHEAD, CAUGHT IN A WIND THAT IS AS MUCH PSIONIC AS PHYSICAL.
HE ONLY GLIMPSES THE HORROR BEFORE HIM, IN THE SHIFTING SHADOWS --
-- BUT THE DANK, FETID SMELL --
-- AND THE OVERWHELMING WAVE OF HUNGER, BLOODLUST AND BLIND UNREASONING RAGE FILLS HIS MIND -- ALMOST DROWNS HIM.
HE TRIES TO BREAK FREE OF THE WIND, TO TWIST AWAY, REACH THE BULKHEAD WALL -- BUT IN THE END ALL HE CAN DO IS --
TANK
KANK
A-AAHH!

HIS SHOULDER FEELS DISLOCATED. AND HE CAN FEEL THE TOUCH OF THE THING --
-- MAKING THE RED RAGE SWELL ALL AROUND HIM --
-- AND HE KNOWS HE'S GOT TO HANG ON -- TO HAUL HIMSELF OUT --
-- BUT --
HE -- HE'S VISIBLY WEAKENING. HE CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER.
HE NEEDS HELP. BUT I'D HAVE TO -- HAVE TO --
SHE SEES HIS FACE. HE WON'T CALL FOR HELP. HE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S THINKING, AND HE WON'T ASK THAT OF HER.
BUT SHE CAN SEE HIM HOPE...
OH, BLAST IT!
HANG ON, MARCUS! JUST A FEW SECONDS LONGER!
HANG ON --
-- I'M HERE.
AND THE HALBERD -- SHE GETS A GOOD GRIP ON IT. AND THROUGH HER LEATHER GLOVES, IT FEELS --
-- IT JUST FEELS LIKE PLAIN METAL --

AND THOUGH THE PSIONIC STORM BUILDS IN HYSTERICAL, SHRIEKING INTENSITY --
NNN-NH!
JUST A... LITTLE MORE...
TH-THANK YOU.
AND THANK YOU... FOR CALLING ME BY NAME... CAROL.
SHORTLY.
THE BULKHEAD IS COMPLETELY SEALED. THEY CAN BARELY HEAR THE ANGRY HOWLS BEYOND IT.
THERE WAS... THERE WAS SOMETHING LIKE THAT IN THE ALPHA FLIGHT FILES, TOO. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD, TOO...
...BUT I'M BETTING THAT'S THE GENETIC PAPPY OF ALL THE MASTER'S PLODEX PETS.
PERHAPS.
BUT IF I MIGHT BRING UP WHAT WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT...
YOU TOOK THE RISK, CAROL. YOU MADE CONTACT -- RISKED YOUR FREEDOM TO SAVE ME.
AND I DID NOT ATTACK.
DID NOT USE HIDDEN TECHNOLOGY TO CONTROL YOUR MIND -- OR CAST ILLUSIONS THAT YOU LOVE ME.
YES?
I... DON'T KNOW THAT, HOW COULD I?
HOW COULD I KNOW FOR SURE WHY I FEEL WHAT I FEEL? HOW COULD I EVER?
FZT ZKK

FZZT
E-EXCUSE ME.
RADIO COMMUNICATION COMING IN. IT'S FAINT, BUT I THINK I CAN...
WARBIRD! GOOD TO SEE YOUR FACE!
WE'RE SAFE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. WE'VE MANAGED TO HOOK BACK UP IN ONE OF THE DAMAGED SECTORS --
-- AND WE'RE READY TO TACKLE THE BAD GUYS. YOU IN?
JUST... KZK... TELL ME WHERE.
I'LL BE... FZZZT... THERE.
GREAT. THE COORDINATES ARE AS FOLLOWS...
AND --
KSSSHHH
MY COMMUNICATIONS GEAR IS FUNCTIONING AGAIN.
I'VE SENT A COMMAND FOR NEW TRANSPORT.

WARBIRD. CAROL.
I... DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH. IF I HAVE WON YOUR REGARD TODAY...
...IF I HAVE WON YOUR REGARD, YOU HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER I DID SO HONESTLY. I KNOW I DID, BUT... BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH.
I WILL LEAVE YOU. YOU NO LONGER NEED MY PHYSICAL SUPPORT, AND WILL ACCEPT NO OTHER KIND.
BUT IF I CAN THINK OF A WAY TO PROVE MYSELF -- SHORT OF BETRAYING MY FATHER -- I WILL DO IT.
AND SHOULD YOU NEED ME...
...ALL YOU NEED DO IS CALL.
SHE WATCHES HIM UNTIL HE VANISHES INTO THE CLOUDS.
SHE TELLS HERSELF SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE POWER TO SUBDUE HIM -- TAKE HIM PRISONER.
SHE TELLS HERSELF HE CAME IN TRUCE, AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE SAME WAY.
SHE TELLS HERSELF. AND SHE WONDERS IF SHE BELIEVES IT...
THE ASTEROID BELT. THE AVENGERS DEEP SPACE MONITOR STATION.
THIS IS NUTS, QUASAR!

IT'S WHAT WE AGREED TO DO. HOW WE AGREED TO SERVE.
MAYBE THAT'S OKAY FOR YOU -- YOU'RE STUCK OUT HERE ANYWAY!
BUT THERE'S A WAR GOING ON BACK HOME! AND I'M WAY OUT HERE WATCHING MONITOR SCREENS AND STUDYING FOR MY MID-TERMS!
I WANT TO GO BACK! I WANT TO DO MY PART!
WE CAN'T JUST ABANDON OUR POST, LIVING LIGHTNING...
LISTEN TO YOURSELF!
YOU EVER HEARD AN ORDER YOU DIDN'T LIKE? THERE'S NOTHING HAPPENING OUT HERE, MAN! AND THEY NEED US THERE!
WE DON'T KNOW THERE'LL BE NO --
VREETVREETVREET
SECTOR 17-A!
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!
I DON'T KNOW, LIGHTNING. BUT WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S BIG -- IT'S HEADED INTO THE SOLAR SYSTEM --
"-- AND IT'S MOVING VERY, VERY FAST...!"

THE ASTEROID BELT.
IT APPEARED AT THE FRINGES OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM, WITHOUT WARNING OR FANFARE. HOW LONG OR HOW FAR IT HAS TRAVELED IS UTTERLY UNKNOWN.
IT GLIDES SOLEMNLY AND MAJESTICALLY THROUGH SPACE, DWARFING ASTEROIDS EVEN HUNDREDS OF MILES THICK --
-- NEITHER SLOWING NOR SHIFTING IN ITS PASSAGE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR EXISTENCE.
NOT ALL THAT IT PASSES RETURNS THE FAVOR, HOWEVER --
-- AS, ON THE AVENGERS DEEP SPACE MONITOR STATION --
YOU GETTING ALL THIS, QUASAR?
VOLUME, MASS -- STRUCTURAL SCAN INDICATES IT MAY NOT BE SOLID ALL THE WAY THROUGH -- AND THE ENERGY IT CONTAINS --
-- IT PACKS MORE POWER THAN THE SUN...!
GOT IT, LIVING LIGHTNING.
AND I'M TRANSMITTING THE DATA TO EARTH AND THE MANSION VIA OUR QUANTUM LINK N --
-- UH-OH.
A-PRIORITY AVENGERS OPERATION IN PROGRESS
INTERRUPT ONLY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY ALERT
GREAT. SHOULD'VE FIGURED.

I'LL SET THE LINK TO PIPE THE INFO INTO THE MANSION'S SYSTEMS -- AND OUR GOVERNMENT LIAISON'S -- AUTOMATICALLY.
THEY CAN CHECK IT OUT WHEN THEY HAVE THE CHANCE.
AS FOR YOU AND ME, LIGHTNING --
"-- WE'D BETTER INVESTIGATE THAT THING -- NOW!"
QUAZE! IS IT -- SPEEDING UP?!
LOOKS THAT WAY. LET'S POUR IT ON, BEFORE IT'S OUT OF RANGE...
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT THING CAME FROM, OR WHY IT'S HERE. BUT I SURE HOPE IT'S NOT A DROP-EVERYTHING-AND-COME-A'RUNNING EMERGENCY --
-- BECAUSE THE REST OF THE AVENGERS ARE ALREADY AWFULLY BUSY...!
EARTH ORBIT.
WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE CHANCE AT THIS -- SO LET'S DO IT RIGHT.
PHOTON, JACK OF HEARTS -- I WANT YOU OUTSIDE, PRONTO. SCARLET WITCH -- AT THE HEX-INDUCTION CORE.
WE'LL BE THERE IN MINUTES -- I WANT EVERYONE IN POSITION AND READY TO GO.
WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL AND --

"-- ATTACK!"
IF THERE WERE AIR IN SPACE TO CARRY SOUND, THE THUNDER OF THE ATTACK WOULD BE HEARD WORLDWIDE, SO GREAT ARE THE ENERGIES UNLEASHED HERE.
BUT EVEN SO, THE TARGET'S FORCE-FIELD HOLDS --
-- AND CAPTAIN AMERICA FINDS HIMSELF GRIPPING THE FIRE-CONTROLS TIGHTLY, PAINFULLY, AS HE SCANS THE READOUTS FOR ANY SIGN OF DAMAGE.
STILL NOTHING.
THE TARGET IS DAMOCLES BASE, ORBITAL COMMAND CENTER OF THE TIME-TRAVELING KANG THE CONQUEROR.
HE HAS DECLARED WAR -- LAUNCHED AN ASSAULT ON EARTH --
-- AND IF THE AVENGERS FAIL HERE -- IN THIS DESPERATE COUNTERSTRIKE --
-- THE END RESULT COULD BE THE FALL OF AN ENTIRE PLANET.
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND! STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE AVENGERS IN --
WAR PLAN "A"
WRITER: KURT BUSIEK COLORS: TOM SMITH
ART: KIERON DWYER WITH RICK REMENDER
RS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
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HERE, JACK OF HEARTS! CONCENTRATE OUR POWER TOGETHER!
MAYBE WE CAN CREATE A HARMONIC PATTERN THAT'LL DISRUPT THE SHIELD -- SHATTER IT! I'M ON IT!
PULSE YOUR BLASTS -- SET UP A RHYTHM! I'LL ESTABLISH A COUNTER-RHYTHM, AND MAYBE --
BUT --
NO GOOD, CAP! I'M TRYING TO REACH OUT THROUGH THE SHIP'S REPULSOR-BLAST -- TAP INTO THE FORCE-FIELD WITH MY CHAOS-MAGIC!
BUT IT KEEPS SHIFTING IN FREQUENCY -- ALTERING ITS ENERGY-STRUCTURE!
I CAN'T -- CAN'T MANAGE TO ENGAGE IT FULLY -- !
KEEP AT IT, WANDA! TONY STARK'S WORKING ON CRACKING THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE FIELD -- HE MAY COME THROUGH FOR US AT ANY MOMENT!
IN THE MEANTIME, WE CAN'T LET UP, NOT FOR A SECOND! IF WE FAIL TO BREAK THROUGH...
DON'T EVEN SAY THAT, CAP! SOMEHOW -- SOME WAY -- WE'LL DO IT! WE HAVE TO!
AND BELOW, ON EARTH, TENSE EYES FOLLOW EVERY MOMENT -- EVERY IOTA OF FEEDBACK --
-- BOTH IN AVENGERS MANSION, WHERE THE WASP HOLDS HER BREATH --
-- AND AT THE PENTAGON --
YES SIR, FLIGHT S-1 IS READY FOR LAUNCH. ACKNOWLEDGED.
KEEP AWAITING GO ORDER...
C'MON, CAP! GO.
GO.
NORTHERN CANADA. ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
THE BASE OF THE SELF- STYLED MASTER OF THE WORLD...

...WHERE ANOTHER AVENGERS SQUAD MOVES STEALTHILY...
I DON'T *LIKE* THIS, WARBIRD.
WHAT'S NOT TO *LIKE,* PIETRO? THE CRAMPED *QUARTERS?* THE STALE *AIR?*
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN AS WELL AS *I* DO, WOMAN.
WE'RE DEEP WITHIN THIS *"MASTER'S"* TERRITORY -- AND HIS SECURITY IS *BETTER* THAN THIS! BUT THERE'S BEEN NO *REACTION* --
-- NOT FOR *HOURS!*
QUICKSILVER'S GOT A *POINT,* WARBIRD.
I'VE BEEN SCANNING FOR *DETECTION FIELDS* -- AND THEY'RE ALL *AROUND* US, AND FULLY ACTIVE. THEY'RE JUST NOT *REGISTERING* US, FOR SOME REASON!
MAYBE THE SECURITY SYSTEMS WERE DAMAGED IN THE *EXPLOSION,* YELLOWJACKET --
-- OR IN THE DAMAGE *WARBIRD* CAUSED, BEFORE WE *CONNECTED UP!*
I WAS IN A *GENETICS* SECTION, SILVERCLAW. I DON'T THINK SECURITY WOULD BE *RUN* FROM THERE.
NO, IT'S *SOMETHING ELSE* --
"-- AND LET'S JUST HOPE IT *KEEPS UP...*"
BIO-SCAN INTERFERENCE REMAINS *ACTIVE.* CONTINUE?
YES. CONTINUE INTERFERENCE...

FRANCE.
KANG SAID EUROPE WOULD FALL WITHIN THREE WEEKS -- AND SO FAR, HIS SCHEDULE HOLDS.
HIS ARMIES ADVANCE ALMOST EVERYWHERE -- THEIR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY RAISING FORTIFICATIONS IN MINUTES --
-- FORTIFICATIONS FROM WHICH HIS SOLDIERS CAN LAUNCH THE NEXT WAVE OF ATTACKS.
ONLY AT A FEW POINTS DO EARTH'S DEFENSE FORCES STAND FIRM -- POINTS SUCH AS THIS ONE. --
AAAAAA
HO, VARLETS!
BRING THOU THY TANKS -- THINE INFERNAL WAR MACHINES! BRING THEM BY THE DOZENS, THE HUNDREDS --
-- THOU SHALT STILL NOT PASS THE MIGHTY THOR!
BUT THOUGH THOR BATTLES VALIANTLY, FEROCIOUSLY --
-- HIS HEART IS SICK, AND HIS SOUL WEARY --
HOW LONG, ALL-FATHER? HOW LONG BEFORE ALL HERE -- THE TRIUMPHANT AND THE SLAIN ALIKE -- ARE AS DUST?
AN EYEBLINK? THE QUICK FLARE OF A CANDLEFLAME GUTTERED OUT BY THE WIND?
HOW LONG ERE ALL THAT HAPPENS TODAY IS LOST IN THE SWEEP OF TIME?
THOR!

"I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, THOR! BUT LOOK AT THEM -- LOOK AT THEM FIGHTING FOR THEIR HOMES, THEIR FREEDOM, THEIR FAMILIES!
"LOOK AT THE PRICE THEY PAY! IT MAY BE AN EYEBLINK TO YOU --"
-- BUT IT'S EVERYTHING TO THEM!
OUR LIVES MAY BE SHORT, THOR -- BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE THEM MEANINGLESS! WE'RE STILL WORTHY OF NOTICE, OF FRIENDSHIP, OF LOVE...
SKRAMMM
"OUR LIVES," FIREBIRD? NAY, SAY RATHER "THEIR LIVES!" FOR IF THOU ART AS IMMORTAL AS I, AS THOU DOST SUSPECT --
-- THEN THOU TOO WILT WATCH ALL THOU DOST BOND WITH, AS THEY CRUMBLE TO DUST BEFORE THEE! THOU HAST A FINE SPIRIT, AND DOST MEAN WELL --
-- BUT THINK ON THAT, MILADY -- THINK ON THAT!
AND BONITA JUAREZ SWALLOWS HARD.
SHE HAS SET OUT TO MAKE A DISHEARTENED THOR SEE THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS -- TO GET HIM TO STAY WITH THE AVENGERS WHEN ALL THIS IS DONE.
BUT WILL SHE SUCCEED IN CHANGING HIS MIND, SHE WONDERS --
-- OR WILL HE CHANGE HERS?
CALLEYVILLE, TEXAS.
THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF THE SPIRITUAL GROUP KNOWN AS THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING.
IT HASN'T BEEN LONG SINCE TWO AVENGERS TRAVELED HERE IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS.
I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT THIS...

-- ONLY TO FIND A CRISIS -- AND MORE QUESTIONS.
FOR ONE OF THE MOST BASIC TENETS OF THE TRIUNE BELIEFS IS THAT A GREAT EVIL IS COMING -- AN EVIL THAT MUST BE OPPOSED --
I AGREE WITH TRIATHLON, MR. TREMONT.
WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT THIS CRAFT IS PSYCHICALLY-POWERED -- THAT IT DRAWS ON THE MENTAL ENERGIES OF THE TRIUNE FOLLOWERS.
AND YOU PROPOSE TO LAUNCH IT WITHOUT A TEST?
IF IT DRAWS TOO MUCH POWER -- IF IT WORKS AT ALL -- IT COULD HURT THEM, KILL THEM --
PLEASE, VISION. I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN. BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, AS WELL -- THE TRIPLE-EVIL IS REAL, AND IT WILL REACH EARTH WITHIN DAYS.
IF IT IS NOT STOPPED, ALL LIFE ON EARTH WILL BE FORFEIT.
THE PRAYER-SHIP IS SAFE, I ASSURE YOU. IT WILL HARM NO ONE.
BUT IF --
WE HAVE HIDDEN NOTHING, TRIATHLON, AS YOU KNOW. WHY WOULD WE START NOW?
WHY, WE EVEN KNEW THE AVENGERS HAD SENT SPIES TO INFILTRATE OUR RANKS, AND DID NOTHING TO PREVENT IT --
-- PREFERRING THAT THEY DISCOVER THERE WAS NOTHING TO FEAR.
IN FACT... JUSTICE, FIRESTAR -- PLEASE!
JOIN US ON THIS MOST CRUCIAL MISSION. ALL HELP IS APPRECIATED.
HUH?
UH...
AND THUS, SOON --
THE GREAT PRAYER-SHIP HUMS AS IT PREPARES FOR FLIGHT, THE TRILL OF ITS ENGINES BEGINNING LOW, THEN BUILDING TO A CHIME, A SONG --

-- AND THEN, AS IT WRENCHES ITSELF FREE FROM THE BOUNDS OF GRAVITY --
-- THAT SONG BECOMES A SHRIEK -- A SCREAM OF PAIN AND BIRTH --
U-UHH!
AAAAHHH!
AAAHHH!
AND THEY BEGIN TO FALL --
-- FIRST IN TWOS AND THREES -- THEN BY THE DOZEN, THE HUNDRED --
THEY FALL -- AND DO NOT RISE --
JONATHAN! THE PEOPLE BELOW -- YOUR PEOPLE! YOU SWORE -- !
CALM YOURSELF, TRIATHLON.
ALREADY, OUR MEDICAL STAFF IS DOING WHAT IT CAN. THE ACOLYTES HAVE DONE WHAT IS NECESSARY, AS DO I. AS, I HOPE, WE ALL WILL -- SOON.
STAY ON COURSE, VASQUEZ.
MANY HAVE GIVEN MUCH OF THEMSELVES TO SEE US THIS FAR -- TO HONOR THEM, WE MUST NOT STOP NOW.
Y-YES, SIR...

HIGH ABOVE...
MORE, PHOTON -- MORE!
MAYBE I'M JUST KIDDING MYSELF -- BUT I THINK I FEEL SOMETHING GIVING -- !
I DON'T -- DON'T THINK I CAN KEEP THIS UP MUCH LONGER, CAP...
YOU CAN, WANDA. I KNOW YOU CAN.
DO IT.
CAP! I THINK I'VE GOT SOMETHING! A SPECIFIC SERIES OF COUNTER-MODULATIONS -- IT MIGHT WORK! I'M SENDING IT UP!
JUST DO IT FAST, CAP! THE JOINT CHIEFS ARE GETTING ANTSY...
STARK, T.
VAN DYNE, J.
AND, WITHIN DAMOCLES BASE, AT THE OPERATIONS CENTER...
ABSORBING EXTERIOR ASSAULT AND RESEQUENCING. SHIELDS TEMPORARILY WEAKENED, BUT ARE NOW RESTORED TO FULL STRENGTH.
EXCELLENT. JUST KEEP AT IT, DEFENSE MODULE ALPHA.
KEEP AT IT...

HOW GOES THE BATTLE, MARCUS?
FATHER!
THE... THE BATTLE GOES WELL, FATHER. THE ATTACKERS ARE HOPELESS -- NOTHING THE AUTOMATIC DEFENSE MODULES CAN'T HANDLE...
TEK
I SEE. YOU HAVE BEEN MONITORING THE SITUATION, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE, FATHER. WHAT ELSE WOULD I BE DOING?
I DO NOT DOUBT YOU, MY SON. I MERELY INQUIRE...
...BECAUSE VERSATILE AS THEY ARE, AUTOMATIC MODULES CANNOT ANTICIPATE EVERYTHING.
FOR EXAMPLE, THOSE "HOPELESS ATTACKERS" SEEM TO HAVE INTRODUCED A NEW SERIES OF SUB-HARMONIC, VARIABLE-FLUX FREQUENCIES TO THEIR ATTACK --
-- AND IT LOOKS AS IF --
"-- YES. THE AVENGERS HAVE JUST BROKEN THROUGH OUR SHIELDS.
"NOT THE DESIRED RESULT, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?"

AH... OF COURSE, FATHER. YOU'RE RIGHT.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE ATTENTIVE. SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED SOMETHING LIKE THIS. I'LL...
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF OVERMUCH.
AFTER ALL, IT IS A MINOR LAPSE --
KLEK
"-- AND EASILY FIXED."
WHAT--?!
JACK, PHOTON! WE'RE HIT!
MOVE IN -- GET INTO DAMOCLES BASE! NOW!
NOW!
CHOOM KOOM
AHH--!
W-WISH WE COULD, CAP -- B-BUT -- SOME SORT OF STASIS RAY -- !

AND BELOW...
I'M SORRY, MADAME WASP. I KNOW YOU'RE OPPOSED TO OUR PLAN, BUT...
THIS HOLOGRAM-TRANSMISSION -- YOU CAN HEAR ME, RIGHT?
I HEAR YOU FINE, GENERAL McGINTY. AND I WISH... I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD SAY.
GOD, I HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT...
SO DO I, MA'AM. SO DO I.
ZAVITZ -- GIVE THE LAUNCH ORDER.
AND IN MOMENTS...
...THEY LAUNCH. 75 OF THEM, FROM THREE LOCATIONS AROUND WASHINGTON.
THEY ARE SENTINELS, ORIGINALLY CREATED TO COMBAT ROGUE MUTANTS, BUT MORE AND MORE --
-- THEY HAVE BECOME AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CONTINGENCY PLANS AGAINST SUPER-NORMAL THREATS.
SEVENTY-FIVE SENTINELS, EACH WITH THE POWER TO LEVEL A SMALL CITY.
AND EACH WITH ONE PROGRAMMED GOAL: REACH KANG. AND NEUTRALIZE HIM, AT ANY COST.

CANADA.
CLANG CLANG CLANG
ALARMS!
AH WELL. WE MADE IT THIS FAR.
RIGHT -- -- SO THERE'S NO MORE NEED FOR STEALTH. LET'S BUST OUT --
-- AND MAKE OUR PRESENCE KNOWN!
AH. THE AVENGERS.
WELCOME TO MY HOME, ALL OF YOU. WELCOME TO MY GLOBAL SEAT OF POWER.
YOU MAY BE REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS, BUT LET IT NOT BE SAID THAT THE RIGHTFUL MASTER OF THE WORLD IS WITHOUT MANNERS.
BUT NOW, HOWEVER, THAT THE NICETIES HAVE BEEN OBSERVED --
WE HAVE INTRUDERS, MY PLODEX WOLVES. PLEASE...
...DEAL WITH THEM!
THE GREAT BEASTS LUNGE FORWARD, FASTER THAN ANY FOUR-LEGGED CREATURE NATIVE TO EARTH --

-- BUT THESE AVENGERS HAVE FACED THEM BEFORE -- AND COUNTER THEIR ATTACK WITH CONFIDENCE.
THE MUTANT SPEEDSTER QUICKSILVER TAKES EVASIVE ACTION --
KLUDD
-- SILVERCLAW SHIFTS INTO GIANT-SLOTH FORM -- HER MOST POWERFUL INCARNATION --
-- AND YELLOWJACKET MAKES GOOD USE OF HIS BIO-DISRUPTOR BLASTS --
ZAKT
DOWN, FIDO!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU -- NOT ON THE FURNITURE!
AS FOR WARBIRD --
YOUR TEAM FIGHTS WELL, MY DEAR. SO ARE YOU HERE TO "RESCUE" THE BUREAUCRATS I'VE BEEN MEETING WITH?
FREEING THE MEN AND WOMEN YOU'VE KIDNAPPED IS OUR SECONDARY GOAL, YES --
-- BUT ONLY SECONDARY.
"IT'S THE DEFENSE-WALLS YOU CREATED -- THAT YOU MADE SPRING UP AROUND DOZENS OF AMERICAN CITIES OVERNIGHT.
"THE WEAPONRY IN THOSE WALLS -- IT MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD OFF KANG. IF SO, WE WANT THEM --
"-- AND WANT THEM UNDER OUR CONTROL, NOT YOURS!"

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
DIDN'T THINK SO. SO...
AH, MY DEAR --
-- I'D BE REMISS NOT TO BE PREPARED FOR YOU.
TANG
MY BODY ARMOR ABSORBS ENERGY-ATTACKS. AND SO --
-- TO BATTLE!
ABOVE...
NNHH
C-CAN'T -- CAN'T MOVE -- !
GOOD AFTERNOON, AVENGERS.
MY SENSORS INFORM ME THAT THERE IS A FLIGHT OF SENTINELS ON THE WAY. SENTINELS.
I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT YOU SO FOOLISH. YOUR GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS, BUT NOT YOU.
YOU HAVE FACED ME BEFORE -- YOU KNOW I AM A TIME-TRAVELER, AND HAVE BEEN ACTIVE, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER --
-- IN TIME-PERIODS RANGING FROM ANCIENT EGYPT TO THE FAR FUTURE.

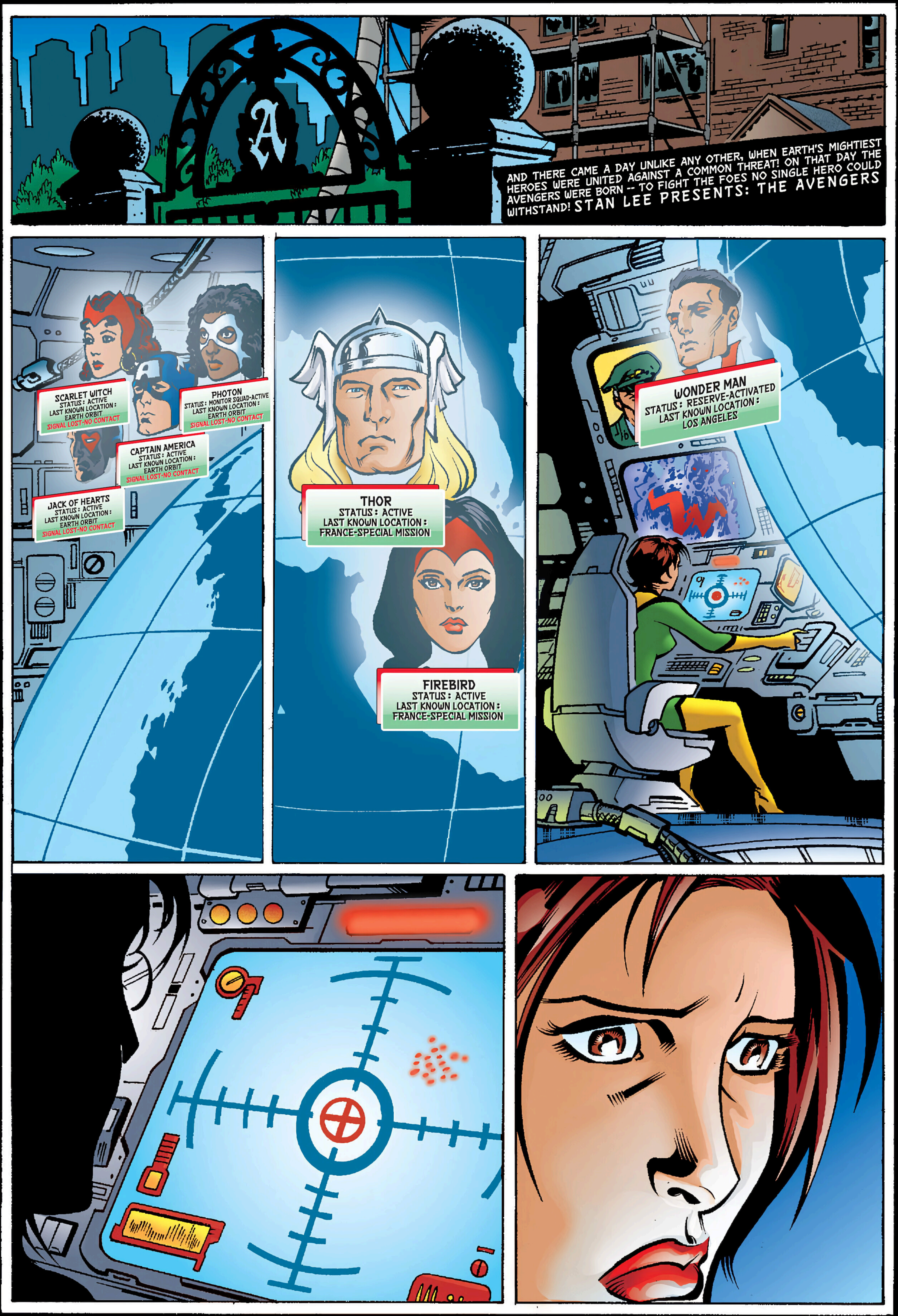
ONE OF THOSE TIME PERIODS WAS THE EARLY PART OF THE PREVIOUS CENTURY. I WAS ACTIVE IN THE GUISE OF VICTOR TIMELY, SCIENTIST AND BUSINESSMAN --
-- AND I HAD QUITE AN INFLUENCE OVER A THEN-DAWNING INDUSTRY.
SPECIFICALLY, THE ROBOTICS INDUSTRY.
BELOW...
THE BATTLE HAS BEEN BRIEF THUS FAR, BUT HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL.
THERE!
N-UHH!
THE PLODEX WOLVES ARE POWERFUL, FOR ALL THEIR LIMITED INTELLIGENCE -- AND HAVE STRETCHED THE AVENGERS TO THEIR LIMITS IN COMBATING THEM.
THOUGH THEY FIGHT ON, THE AVENGERS HAVE VISIBLY SLOWED.
AND --
YOU HAVE NOT BROKEN THROUGH MY GUARD ONCE, MY DEAR -- AND IT SEEMS YOU'RE GETTING TIRED. I SHOULD WARN YOU --
-- THAT I HAVE GENETICALLY ENGINEERED MYSELF TO BE THE PERFECT MAN, WITH REFLEXES AND STAMINA FAR BEYOND HUMAN LEVELS.
AND SINCE YOU ARE BOUND BY THE AVENGERS' POLICY AGAINST LETHAL FORCE, AND I AM NOT --
-- I FEEL I SHOULD OFFER YOU A CHANCE TO SURRENDER HONORABLY.
AH!
YOU'RE -- MAKING A MISTAKE, MASTER...

YOU'RE EXPECTING US TO ACT LIKE NICE-NICE SUPER HEROES -- TO TREAT YOU LIKE A BANK ROBBER, OR YOUR AVERAGE MEGALOMANIACAL LUNATIC.
TH-THE FLOOR!
SHAMM
BUT THE WORLD'S AT WAR, BIG SHOT -- AT WAR!
AND THAT MEANS --
SHUKKK
-- THE RULES HAVE CHANGED!
WHMP
WH-WHAT --?
H-HUH?

WITHOUT THEIR MASTER, THE PLODEX WOLVES ARE EASILY DEFEATED, AND THE CALL GOES OUT.
THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE. COMPUTER AND MUNITIONS TECHNICIANS ARE ON THE WAY IN TO START WORK ON THOSE WEAPONS CONTROLS --
-- AND ALPHA FLIGHT WILL SECURE THE BASE.
GOOD WORK, AVENGERS.
WHILE, ABOVE --
I WAS NOT SO FOOLISH AS TO AVOID PLANTING SAFEGUARDS IN ALL THE TECHNOLOGY THAT DESCENDED FROM MY WORK. SAFEGUARDS --
-- AND CONTROLS.
A FEW ROBOTIC BEINGS HAVE ESCAPED THAT CONTROL, INCLUDING THE VISION AND THE ANDROID HUMAN TORCH --
ONE SWIFT GESTURE --
-- AND THE SENTINELS CHANGE COURSE, THEIR PROGRAMMING OVERRIDDEN --
-- BUT ALAS FOR YOU --
-- THE SENTINELS HAVE NOT.
I REALLY WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT THIS OF YOU, AVENGERS.

WH- WHAT?!
BUT -- BUT --
WHAT HAVE WE DONE -- ?
CAP --
-- CAP WARNED THEM -- !
I MUST ALSO REMIND YOU, AVENGERS -- I DID SAY THAT IF I OR MY FORCES WERE ENGAGED OTHER THAN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE --
-- THERE WOULD BE RETRIBUTION.
AND I AM A MAN OF MY WORD.
YOU HAVE ATTACKED MY COMMAND CENTER. THUS, I WILL OBLITERATE YOURS.
HE TURNS --
-- AND BEGINS, HIS TREAD MEASURED AND PRECISE -- TO WALK DOWNWARD --

-- BUT --
AH.
I'M FORGETTING SOMETHING.
THERE.
COME ALONG, MY SENTINELS.
AND THIS TIME, WHEN HE TURNS AWAY --
-- HE DOES NOT TURN BACK AGAIN --

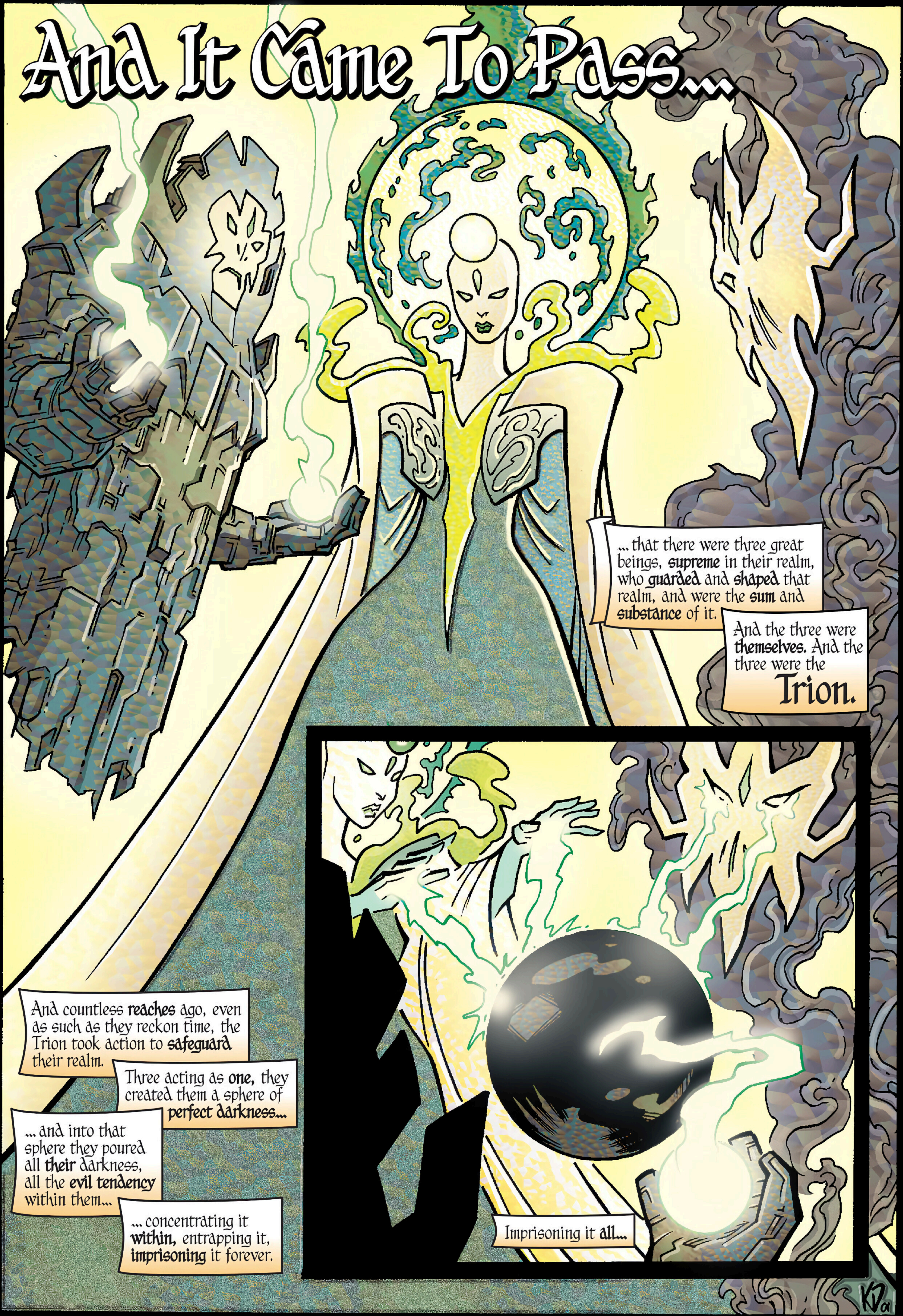

AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND! STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE AVENGERS
SCARLET WITCH STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: EARTH ORBIT SIGNAL LOST-NO CONTACT
PHOTON STATUS: MONITOR SQUAD-ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: EARTH ORBIT SIGNAL LOST-NO CONTACT
CAPTAIN AMERICA STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: EARTH ORBIT SIGNAL LOST-NO CONTACT
JACK OF HEARTS STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: EARTH ORBIT SIGNAL LOST-NO CONTACT
THOR STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: FRANCE-SPECIAL MISSION
FIREBIRD STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: FRANCE-SPECIAL MISSION
WONDER MAN STATUS: RESERVE-ACTIVATED LAST KNOWN LOCATION: LOS ANGELES

Massachusetts Ave. 1/2
New York Ave. 1
Addison Rd. 3
D.C. Flowers
Champion
MOVERS
Greenway
ORGANIC
GROCERS

930
STATE

THERE ARE NO WORDS...

KURT BUSIEK WRITER KIERON DWYER WITH RICK REMENDER ARTISTS
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS OF COMICRAFT LETTERS
YOUNGQUIST & SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITORS TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT


And It Came To Pass...
... that there were three great beings, supreme in their realm, who guarded and shaped that realm, and were the sum and substance of it.
And the three were themselves. And the three were the Trion.
And countless reaches ago, even as such as they reckon time, the Trion took action to safeguard their realm.
Three acting as one, they created them a sphere of perfect darkness...
... and into that sphere they poured all their darkness, all the evil tendency within them...
... concentrating it within, entrapping it, imprisoning it forever.
Imprisoning it all...

...all but for one tiny shard... one jagged fragment of dark, concentrated evil...
...which tore through a rift in reality, tore through into another realm.
And there, in that realm, the shard began a great journey...
...a long and hungry journey across the vastness of space...
EARTH ORBIT.

H-UHH!
NNNH...
E-EVASIVE ACTION, EVERYONE... GET OUT OF --
IT'S ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN AMERICA. KANG APPARENTLY DESTROYED YOUR SHIP -- KNOCKED PHOTON AND THE JACK OF HEARTS FOR A LOOP --
-- BUT THE LIVING LIGHTNING AND I ARRIVED IN TIME TO STOP HIS ROBOT DRONES FROM REACHING YOU -- CAPTURING YOU.
QUASAR.
LUCKILY, PHOTON MUST HAVE PARTIALLY PHASED INTO HER ENERGY-FORM WHILE UNCONSCIOUS --
-- OR THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D HAVE SURVIVED THE EXPOSURE TO HARD VACUUM.
AND -- AND THE SCARLET WITCH?
WHERE'S WANDA?!
LO SIENTO, PHOTON. THE DRONES, THEY REACHED HER BEFORE WE DID... TOWED HER BACK TO KANG'S BASE.
WE WERE UNABLE TO PENETRATE ITS FORCE-FIELD.
KANG! HE SAID THERE'D BE RETRIBUTION -- HE WAS GOING TO ATTACK EARTH WITH A FLIGHT OF SENTINELS!
WE'VE GOT TO --
THERE'S ANOTHER SITUATION, CAP.
IT MIGHT TAKE PRECEDENCE.

And it came to pass...
...that the universe reacted to the presence of the evil that journeyed through it... forming opposition, even as a body forms defenses against disease.
And these fragments of light were three in number...
...and they, too, did journey...
...tumbling through trackless space, awaiting a time they would be found... found and used against the taint that had invaded their world.
And in time, one of these fragments... the second of them...
...was found by a ship commanded by sentients... sentients on a mission of reconnaissance and conquest...
I DON'T KNOW, WENDELL. WE'VE GOT A CRISIS IN FRONT OF US RIGHT NOW -- WE DON'T NEED TO GO LOOKING FOR MORE.
I THINK WE SHOULD RETURN TO EARTH AT ALL DELIBERATE SPEED.
BUT CAP -- WE CAN'T JUST IGNORE A POTENTIAL THREAT.
IT COULD BE AS DANGEROUS AS KANG -- OR WORSE!
OR IT COULD BE AN IRRELEVANCE -- AT A TIME WE HAVE LITTLE ATTENTION TO SPARE. WE'VE BEEN DIVIDING OUR FORCES TOO OFTEN LATELY --
-- AND IF WE MAKE A SINGLE MISSTEP -- IT COULD HAVE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES.
WE'LL DO WHATEVER YOU SAY, OF COURSE. BUT --
CAPTAIN --

-- I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO HEAR FROM ANOTHER QUARTER--!
GREETINGS, AVENGERS!
THIS IS JONATHAN TREMONT OF THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING! WE HAVE SEVERAL OF YOUR COMRADES ABOARD, AND WOULD BE PLEASED IF YOU'D JOIN US...
And it came to pass...
... that in a region known as the Naga Hills, in a nation called India, on a planet known by its inhabitants as Earth...
... there grew a village, and that village in time birthed three brothers.
And one of the brothers grew wise...
And one grew strong...
And the third and youngest brother, he had charming ways...
OH, GO ON WITH YOU AND YOUR HONEYED TALK. GO!
But there came to this village a sickness, that swept through its people like fire through dry grass...
... and for all their wisdom, all their strength...
... two of the brothers fell before it.
And only the youngest was left. And he wondered why he had been spared. Why had the universe saved him?
What purpose was he kept alive for?

What role was he to play?
TRIATHLON, VISION, FIRESTAR. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. BUT HOW DID...?
JUSTICE IS HERE AS WELL, CAPTAIN. WE CAME ON THIS MISSION WITH THE TRIUNE... AND THERE IS MUCH TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT.
MAYBE LATER, VISION. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
THIS THREAT -- THIS MISSION -- I ASSUME THEY'RE LINKED. IN BRIEF, THEN -- WHAT IS IT, AND WHERE?
IN BRIEF, CAPTAIN? I BELIEVE I CAN ACCOMPLISH THAT IN A WORD, AS WE ARE COMING UP ON OUR DESTINATION NOW. THE THREAT WE SPEAK OF IS...
...THERE!
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!
Book of Revelations
A VERY UNUSUAL FIFTIETH ISSUE CELEBRATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
WRITER: KURT BUSIEK ARTISTS: KIERON DWYER & RICK REMENDER
COLORS: TOM SMITH LETTERS: RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT
MARC SUMERAK, JEFF YOUNGQUIST ASSISTANT EDITORS TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT
I SEE.
THEN PERHAPS... I DO NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS...

And it came to pass...
DRIVE IN
...that in a region known as California, in a nation called the United States...
THAT'S CHUCK FOR YOU, PEG. THE FASTEST JETS, THE NEWEST CARS...
...AND THE BEST TASTE IN GIRLS!
WHY, HAL -- YOU'LL TURN MY HEAD...!
...there were two more brothers.
And one was strong, and one was weak and sickly. But there was a bond between them...
...a bond that attracted a young woman of their tribe to both of them.
The elder, stronger brother was a warrior...
USAF
...a warrior chosen to test a swift flying machine, great by the measure of their tribe.
But swift and great as the machine was, during the test...
...the warrior-brother encountered another, advanced far beyond his experience.
HOLY CATS! A U.F.O.!
The warrior-brother was captured, drawn into the larger ship.
But he bested his captors...
THAT WAS YOUR FIRST MISTAKE, GREENIE --
-- AND HERE'S YOUR SECOND!
...and escaped, flying free once more.
USAF

But as he soared free of the destruction of the invader craft, he was bathed in light, and heat, and power...
... for the invader craft had held the second fragment of light...
And even as he brought his machine to Earth safely, after a fashion...
... he was being changed. Transformed by the light that burned within him.
HAL!
CHUCK!
CHUCK!
He fought to reach his brother...
... and even as he was pulled apart...
... pulled into two...
... his brother's bond with him held him together... embracing him, grounding him. And where there were three... there was one.
It was the younger brother who walked the Earth thereafter. But he could release his brother's spirit, give it form, for brief periods...
S-SOME KINDA JAZZED-UP G-MAN! GUN 'IM DOWN!
NOT A CHANCE, HOODLUMS! WHEN THE 3-D MAN'S IN TOWN, CHEAP PUNKS LIKE YOU HEAD UPSTATE --
-- FOR A LONG STRETCH AT FOLSOM!
NATIONAL BANK
EST. 1903
DINER
RIALTO
WAR OF THE
LDS
And in that form, and in that era...

...two brothers became a single hero.
...AND WITH THE SHIP ALREADY LAUNCHED, WE WERE UNABLE TO AID THE FALLEN TRIUNE ACOLYTES BELOW...
...AND DID NOT THINK IT WISE TO STRAIN THEM FURTHER BY FORCING A LANDING.
SO HERE YOU ARE. WELL, I CAN'T SAY I LIKE THE IDEA OF DRAINING HUMAN PSYCHES TO POWER A SPACESHIP --
-- BUT I DON'T LIKE HEARING ABOUT AVENGERS SPYING ON PRIVATE CITIZENS, EITHER.
WE THOUGHT IT NECESSARY, CAPTAIN. AND AS WE DISCOVERED --
AS YOU DISCOVERED, YES. ALWAYS EASY TO JUSTIFY THINGS AFTER THE FACT.
IT SOUNDS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO HAVE A TALK WITH IRON MAN WHEN WE GET BACK. AND WITH YOU AND WARBIRD, AS WELL.
BUT IN THE MEANTIME, WE'RE HERE. THE HAND'S BEEN DEALT, SO LET'S PLAY IT OUT.
QUASAR, YOU SAY THE PYRAMID WAS PICKED UP BY THE DEEPSPACE SCANNERS?
YES, CAP. AND WE HAD TO INVESTIGATE. IT WAS MOVING SO FAST, ON A DEAD-ON COURSE FOR EARTH --
-- AND THE DATA INDICATED IT HOLDS ENORMOUS POWER.
POWER? IT HOLDS MORE THAN THAT, MY FRIENDS. WHAT PULSES WITHIN ITS DEPTHS IS PURE, UNALLOYED EVIL --
-- AND IT MAY BE THE GREATEST DANGER EARTH HAS EVER FACED.
IT IS THE TRIPLE-EVIL, AVENGERS. ITS COMING HAS BEEN FORETOLD --
-- AND IT MUST BE STOPPED. THAT IS THE ONE AND ONLY REASON THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING WAS CREATED.

And it came to pass...
...that the two who had become three who had become one ceased to be active as a hero of his people...
...and for many years, he was barely glimpsed in the wider world.
The sickly brother came to love the woman who'd loved his brother, and she loved him too. And they wed...
...and they created them a family, which grew and departed, as families do...
And in time, the brother began to have dreams. Urgent, insistent dreams...
...AND I FEEL THEM CALLING, PEG. CALLING ME HALFWAY 'ROUND THE WORLD. AND I'VE GOT TO GO, GOT TO ANSWER... BEFORE I CRACK UP COMPLETELY.
THIS CALL, HAL... IS IT DANGEROUS?
I THINK SO, YES.
BUT I'VE STILL GOT TO GO.
THEN GO. BUT PROMISE ME THIS, HAROLD CHANDLER. WHATEVER THIS CALL IS, WHATEVER HAPPENS...
...YOU'LL COME BACK TO ME.
I PROMISE, PEGGY.
I LOVE YOU. AND I'LL COME BACK TO YOU.

I WANT TO BE CLEAR ON THIS. WE'RE HERE, AND WE'LL INVESTIGATE --
-- BUT WE'RE NEEDED ON EARTH, AND WE CAN'T SPARE ANY MORE TIME THAN IS NECESSARY. IF IT TURNS OUT THAT THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN BE PUT OFF --
-- THEN WE PUT IT OFF, RETURN TO EARTH, AND DEAL WITH THIS THING AFTER KANG'S NO LONGER A THREAT.
ALL RIGHT.
UNDERSTOOD, CAPTAIN. BUT I TELL YOU NOW --
-- WE WILL FIND THAT DEALING WITH THE TRIPLE-EVIL CANNOT BE DELAYED, CANNOT BE PUT OFF.
YOU WILL SEE.
OKAY, QUAZE -- WE'RE IN CONTACT. YOU CAN OPEN A GAP IN THE Q-BUBBLE. STILL DON'T SEE ANY HATCHES, BUT --
-- HEY, THAT'S FUNNY. I THOUGHT THIS WAS MACHINERY --
-- BUT IT LOOKS MORE ORGANIC, LIKE A HIDE. OR A SCAB.
I'LL SEE WHAT IT FEELS L --

And it came to pass...
... that the younger brother's quest brought him across his world, to an area north of the Naga Hills...
... to mountains known to men as the Himalayas.
And for months he felt the call... for months he searched...
A-AAAH!
AMERICAN SIR!
I'M ALL RIGHT... ALL RIGHT.
DIDN'T FALL...
NO, AMERICAN SIR. YOU DID NOT FALL, NOT THIS TIME.
BUT THE MOUNTAIN... IT IS TOO DIFFICULT FOR ONE OF YOUR AGE, OF YOUR CONDITION. YOU MUST GIVE UP THIS MAD QUEST...
NO...
NO, I CAN'T. I'VE GOT TO -- GOT TO KEEP GOING -- I CAN FEEL IT --
IT'S IMPORTANT -- IMPORTANT --

Winter came, and with it, its high winds and fierce blizzards.
And still the brother sought...
GOT TO --
GOT TO --
And in time...
HERE!
I DON'T KNOW HOW I KNOW -- DON'T KNOW WHY -- BUT IT'S HERE!
IT'S HERE!
IT'S --
YES, AMERICAN SIR. IT IS HERE.
AND IT IS MINE.

JACK! JACK OF HEARTS! GOOD NEWS!
GOOD NEWS! WE'VE FOUND A WAY TO GIVE YOU COMPLETE CONTROL OVER YOUR POWER! YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TURN IT ON AND OFF AT WILL --
-- SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO WEAR YOUR ARMOR TO HOLD IT IN! YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAD A NORMAL LIFE!
REALLY?
YES! AND THAT'S NOT ALL! THE MORE SOPHISTICATED GENETIC SCANS WE DID, TO FIND THAT SOLUTION?
THEY'VE REVEALED THAT THERE WAS AN ERROR -- YOU'RE NOT HALF-ALIEN AT ALL! YOU'RE 100% HUMAN!
MIGUEL SANTOS! YOUR TIME AS LIVING LIGHTNING, WITH THE AVENGERS, MADE YOU A SHOO-IN FOR ASSEMBLYMAN -- AND NOW FOR GOVERNOR!
WHAT'S NEXT? THE SENATE?
WHY THINK SMALL, CARMEN?
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO SO MUCH GOOD FOR THE LATINO COMMUNITY ALREADY -- WHY STOP THERE?
WHY NOT GO ALL THE WAY?
C'MON, VICTOR!
WE'VE GOT A FULL DAY AHEAD -- DIVING, WATER-SKIING -- THEN DINNER AND DANCING!
DARBY?
PLEASE, VISION. I MADE A MISTAKE. I WANT YOU TO COME BACK.
WANDA...?
NO --
NO, THIS ISN'T REAL -- SOMETHING'S WRONG --

-- THIS ISN'T REAL --
-- HAPPY TO ACCEPT THE POSITION OF AVENGERS CHAIRMAN AGAIN, AND THIS TIME --
-- DISBAND THE AVENGERS, NOW THAT THE WORLD'S AT PEACE, AND THERE'S NO MORE NEED FOR US --
OH, MARSHA...
"IN STEPPING ON THIS GLASS, I COMMEMORATE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE, SO THAT EVEN AT THIS HAPPY TIME..."
MOM? MOM, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU --
-- SO GOOD TO BE HOME...
I WANT --
I WANT --
KANG -- HE'S THREATENING -- ATTACKING EARTH --
RETRIBUTION -- I DON'T HAVE TIME --
I DON'T -- DON'T --

NNH!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
?
H-HUH?
WH --?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHY ARE YOU CONTROLLING OUR MINDS? FEEDING US FANTASIES?
ILLUSIONS... JUST ILLUSIONS...
PLEASE, BLUE MAN -- THERE IS NO NEED FOR HARSH. WE ARE ONLY TO AID YOU SEEKING.
DREAMS...
WE YOUR MINDS SCAN FOR FONDEST WISHES -- THAT HELP WE MAY TO REALITY MAKE THEM. BRING DREAMS TO YOU. BRING PEACE TO YOU.
ALL WE NEED IS A WAY OUT OF HERE --
-- SO WE CAN GET BACK TO EARTH, WHERE WE'RE NEEDED.
NO NECESSITY FOR RUSH. DEPARTURE NEEDED NOT.

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS.
COME ON, AVENGERS -- WE'LL FIND THE EXIT OURSELVES.
BLUE MAN?
CAPTAIN?
WE MUST STAY! WE STILL HAVE TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH OF --
YOU CAN STAY, TREMONT, IF YOU LIKE -- BUT THE REST OF US HAVE A JOB TO DO, AND WE'VE WASTED QUITE ENOUGH TIME --
BLUE MAN, I SO SORRY --
-- BUT WE CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO DEPART.
KSSSSSSSH
THE ENTIRE CHAMBER WE WERE IN -- THE ALIENS THEMSELVES --!
MORE ILLUSIONS!
AND BEYOND IT...
WH-WHAT? WHAT?!

UH-OH.
I THINK WE FOUND BOSS TREMONT'S "TRIPLE-EVIL"...
SWIFTLY, AVENGERS! A DEFENSIVE FORMATION!
THEY MASS TO ATTACK --!
And it came to pass...
... that as the enemy within leapt to the attack...
... the planet's assembled heroes suddenly felt... awareness.
HUH?
IN MY HEAD -- MY MIND!
ANOTHER ATTACK!
NO -- IT'S JUST IMAGES -- JUST INFORMATION! JUST --

"-- THE TRUTH!"
And they saw. They saw, as the shard of darkness journeyed across space.
Wherever its path took it, it radiated foul, corrupting evil.
And wherever its path took it, it found resistance. Mighty emipires. Lone planets. All who encountered it fought against it --
-- and all were lost. Their best and bravest were enticed into dreams and death...
... and their bodies corrupted, become soldiers in the service of darkness.
That which had been their ships became armor for the shard. And their planets, their civilizations destroyed...
... all the fire that once burned within their races became part of the shard's power.
And its journey continued. And its power grew.
And they saw.

And just as all the others...
... they fought.
BATTLE BRAVELY, AVENGERS! REMEMBER, YOU FIGHT NOT MERELY TO SAVE A CITY, OR A NATION --
-- BUT FOR ALL OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION!
BELIEVE ME, TREMONT --
-- WE DON'T NEED YOU TO REMIND US OF THAT.
THREE O'CLOCK, JACK.
THANKS, CAP.
SO, MIGUEL -- YOU FINALLY GOT THAT ACTION YOU'VE BEEN ITCHING FOR, IT SEEMS.
I GUESS SO, ESE --
-- BUT I GOTTA ADMIT, I WAS THINKING MORE SPACE-PIRATES, NOT THE END OF THE WORLD...
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE HELPING TREMONT -- HELPING AN ANTI-MUTANT BIGOT, WHO'D JUST AS SOON SEE US WIPED OUT!
BACK OFF, YOU!
I DON'T THINK HE'S REALLY ANTI-MUTANT, VANCE...
...JUST THAT HE WAS SIMPLY DOING OR SAYING ANYTHING THAT'D BRING HIM RECRUITS, INCREASE HIS POWER.
NOT THAT THAT'S A WHOLE LOT BETTER...

I GUESS JONATHAN'S RIGHT --
-- THIS IS A MAJOR THREAT, AND IT'S GOT TO BE OPPOSED -- BUT THERE'S SOMETHING MORE GOING ON HERE --
IT'S ALMOST LIKE I CAN -- LIKE I CAN SENSE IT, OR --
-- OR REMEMBER IT?
BATTLE'S GOING WELL -- EH, VISION?
YES, PHOTON.
IF THIS IS ALL THE STRENGTH THEY CAN MUSTER AGAINST US, THE TRIPLE-EVIL WILL PROVE TO BE A MINOR THREAT.
THEIR FORCES FALL EASILY TO A SEMI-INTANGIBLE HAND, DISRUPTING THEIR --
--AAAARRH!
SOME SORT OF -- OF FEEDBACK -- !
THEY'RE -- THEY'RE ABSORBING MY BLAST -- ABSORBING MY ENERGY-FORM! THEY COULDN'T DO THAT BEFORE -- !
WELL, SOMETHING'S CHANGED, PHOTON! MY ZERO-BLASTS ARE ENOUGH TO SHATTER MOONS --
-- BUT THEY'RE SOAKING 'EM UP LIKE SUNSHINE AT THE BEACH!
MY Q-CONSTRUCTS, TOO! THEY'VE SOMEHOW ADAPTED TO OUR POWERS!

THEN KEEP MOVING, EVERYONE!
SWAP OPPONENTS! STRIKE AND MOVE ON! DON'T FIGHT THE SAME CREATURES TWICE!
DON'T GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO ADAPT TO YOUR SKILLS!
YOUR WARNING COMES -- SLIGHTLY TOO LATE FOR ME, CAPTAIN! THE WALLS -- THE FLOOR --
-- IT SEEMS I AM UNABLE TO MOVE!
BUT THOUGH I MAY BE TRAPPED, I HAVE POWERS BEYOND THOSE THEY KNOW --
-- AND I SHALL NOT REMAIN THAT WAY!
BROTHERS! I NEED THY STRENGTH -- THY POWER! I CALL ON YOU, BROTHERS --
--COME TO ME!
WE HEAR YOU, BROTHER --

-- AND WE RESPOND!
PAGAN? LORD TEMPLAR? THEY WERE PART OF HIM? MAN, I LIKE THIS GUY LESS AND LESS!
ALL THOSE FIGHTS -- ALL THAT DESTRUCTION -- JUST A SCAM, TO MAKE THE AVENGERS LOOK BAD, AND HIM LOOK BETTER!
BUT... HOW...?
It was the third shard. The third shard of light.
It had called to him in dreams, too. Called to him... and though he needed the American to locate it for him...
...he knew it was meant to be his.
For was he not three-in-one?
Had he not clung to his brothers' spirits... kept them close to him, even since their deaths?
Were they not with him always?
THANK YOU, BROTHER...
THANK YOU FOR RESTORING OUR LIVES. WE WILL SERVE YOU... SERVE YOU IN ALL THINGS...
And did he not have purpose?
A THREAT IS COMING, MY BROTHERS.
WE MUST BE PREPARED TO FACE IT. WE MUST AMASS POWER...

FEAR NOT, AVENGER.
LORD TEMPLAR WILL NOT PERMIT YOU TO COME TO HARM.
JUST GET AWAY FROM ME, YOU FAKES!
I'LL GET FIRESTAR AND LIGHTNING OUT OF HERE MYSELF! THE AVENGERS CAN TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN!
YOU MAY NOT WISH OUR AID, LITTLE MAN...
...BUT STILL, YOU HAVE IT!
LET IT GO, JUSTICE.
YOUR ANGER IS UNDERSTANDABLE -- BUT SAVE IT UNTIL AFTER THIS BATTLE IS WON. FOR NOW, WE'LL TAKE ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET!
THAT'S ANOTHER DOWN!
BUT I FEEL SO -- FEEL SO --
YOU!
I REMEMBER NOW! YOU... HURT ME! IN THE MOUNTAINS! YOU HIT ME... FROM BEHIND...
BUT HOW... HOW COULD... IT WASN'T ME...
YOU REMEMBER?!
YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCED? BUT --

And he came to the West, to spread his word, to gather believers...
ALL STRENGTH COMES FROM BALANCE, MY FRIENDS -- FROM THE THREEFOLD FORCES IN HARMONY.
MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT -- PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE -- DREAM, MEMORY, REALITY --
And all the time, he felt it coming, coming closer... the darkness, the evil...
WITHOUT BALANCE, WE ARE LOST --
But he felt more, saw it in dreams...
Saw a champion arise... a champion empowered by one of the shards of light. By the first shard.
He saw the champion do battle...
...and he saw the champion fall, his mind gone, his body and soul corrupted, drawn into the darkness...
One shard alone was not enough. He would need greater power.
And his voice was heard. And he drew more followers, and still more...
WE MUST SEEK THE BALANCE WITHIN US -- SEEK HARMONY AND PEACE --
-- INSTEAD OF STRUGGLING, AND ONLY CREATING MORE DISCORD --
And he grew in influence, and used the power of the shard to reach into the spirits of his acolytes, drawing on their energies...
...and he began to change, becoming something outwardly human but inwardly far, far more...

...though even that, he knew, might prove too little.
But the other was still with him... the doubled life, who had internalized the second shard, just as he had the third...
And in time, a troubled soul came, seeking guidance, seeking redemption. An athlete, who had valued victory over honor...
...who had fallen into disgrace, and sought surcease from shame...
EXIT
And in the athlete, he found something he had been seeking... a man whose spirit sang close to that of the doubled man...
...close enough that the one could serve to hold the other...
It required months of preparation... to soothe the troubled athlete's spirit, to open his soul.
...but in time...
AND HERE YOU GO, DELROY... OR SHOULD I SAY, TRIATHLON? WHERE ONCE YOU COMPETED FOR PERSONAL GLORY, NOW YOU SHALL FIGHT FOR JUSTICE, TO EASE THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS...
He would be another servant... a weapon against the coming evil, if needed. And until then, his exploits would win more converts...

...amass greater power.
I... YES, I REMEMBER! I REMEMBER IT ALL, NOW! SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PLACE...
YOU SEEMED SO CARING, SO HELPFUL -- BUT YOU DIDN'T CARE AT ALL, DID YOU? NOT ABOUT YOUR TEACHINGS, NOT ABOUT YOUR FOLLOWERS!
ALL YOU WANTED WAS THE POWER!
I HELPED PEOPLE, DELROY! I EASED THEIR PAIN! GUIDED THEM TO HARMONY!
AND I NEEDED THE POWER! I NEEDED IT! I HAD TO STOP THE TRIPLE-EVIL -- HAD TO BE PREPARED! IT WAS MY MISSION --
--AND IT WAS ALL IN SERVICE OF THIS ONE MOMENT -- IN SERVICE OF THIS GREAT VICTORY!
I SHALL BE A SAVIOR, TRIATHLON -- THE SAVIOR OF AN ENTIRE WORLD!
UH-HUH.
AND WHEN IT'S OVER? WHEN YOU'VE SAVED THE WORLD -- IF YOU DO? WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ALL THAT POWER YOU'VE BUILT UP THEN?
THE EARTH WILL HAVE BEEN SAVED.
SAVED BY MY HAND.
AND WHAT BETTER REWARD FOR HE WHO ACCOMPLISHES SUCH A MIRACLE --

--THAN A GIFT --
-- THE GIFT OF TOTAL DOMINION OVER THAT WHICH HAS BEEN SAVED! OVER EARTH --
-- AND ALL WHO LIVE ON IT!
OH, GREAT.
WE GOT MORE TROUBLE, AVENGERS!
TREMONT -- HE'S GOTTA BE STOPPED, TOO! IF HE WINS, THE WORLD'S JUST AS HOSED AS IT IS IF KANG WINS, OR THIS PYRAMID!
CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED. WELL, WE'LL DEAL WITH IT THE BEST WE CAN...
HOLY -- ! HE'S HUGE!
I SENSE THE POWER I MUST BEST -- AND IT IS STILL TOO GREAT. I MUST HAVE MORE. MUST HAVE...
APOLOGIES, MY FAITHFUL ONES --
HUH?
WH -- ?
-- BUT THE POWER OF THY SPIRITS --
-- MUST BE TURNED TO A GLORIOUS PURPOSE!

HE JUST -- JUST KILLED THEM! HIS OWN MEN!
AND THE ALIENS -- THEY'RE BUGGING OUT!
IT'S THE POWER HE'S RADIATING -- THEY FEAR IT, SOMEHOW --
IT'S ONE LESS THING TO WORRY ABOUT.
BRING HIM DOWN. MAYBE WE CAN MAKE HIM SEE REASON -- OR FAILING THAT, COMMANDEER THAT POWER OF HIS -- !
AH, MY BROTHERS. I SHALL NEED YOU, TOO --
WHAT? BUT -- YOU BROUGHT US BACK TO LIFE! SAVED US!
YOU CAN'T JUST KILL US AGAIN! YOU --
--CAANNNTTTT...
I DO WHAT I MUST, BROTHERS! WHAT ONLY I CAN DO!
AND NOW I SENSE IT -- THE TRUE PRIZE HERE!
IT IS THE PYRAMID ITSELF -- SUFFUSED WITH THE SPIRITS, THE POWER OF ALL THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES FIGHTING IT -- WHOSE SOULS WERE TAKEN BY THE EVIL!
I CAN WREST IT FROM THE DARKNESS -- BECOME AS A GOD MYSELF! AND ALL I NEED --

-- IS THE LAST OF THE POWER NEEDED TO OPPOSE THE DARKNESS!
THE POWER OF THE SECOND SHARD!
THE POWER WITHIN YOU, TRIATHLON!
WHOA!
SORRY, TREMONT -- BUT I'M NOT VOLUNTEERIN'! NOT IN A MILLION YEARS!
OH?
BEFORE, I COULD NOT TAKE THE SECOND SHARD UNTO ME -- SO I GIFTED IT TO YOU. BUT NOW I AM MORE -- NOW I CAN WIELD IT --
-- AND FOR THE EARTH'S SALVATION --
YOU ARE FAST, TRIATHLON -- FAST AND AGILE. I KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS, FOR IT WAS I WHO GAVE THEM TO YOU.
BUT YOU CANNOT ELUDE MY REACH FOREVER -- I KNOW THAT, TOO, AS DO YOU.

UHH!
-- YOU MUST FALL!
YOU ARE A TRIPLED SOUL -- WARRIOR, SCHOLAR AND ATHLETE -- BONDED WITH AND EMPOWERED BY THE SECOND SHARD.
BUT THAT BOND MUST BE SEVERED -- AND THE POWER OF THE SHARD --
-- EH?
N-NO!
I WON'T -- WE WON'T LET YOU! WON'T LET YOU TAKE OVER EARTH -- AS BAD AS KANG --
OH COME NOW. YOU CAN'T ESCAPE.
JUMP ALL YOU LIKE -- FLEE DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE HEART OF THE PYRAMID -- ALL THAT SHALL HAPPEN IS --
WHAT? WHAT IS IT YOU SEE?
IT'S --

IT'S -- IT'S THE *FIRST* SHARD!
THE CHAMPION WHO *BORE* IT -- I CAN FEEL HIS STRUGGLE -- FEEL HIS *DEATH* -- !
THIS IS WHERE HE *FELL* --
-- THIS IS WHERE *IT* FELL --
NO!
NO -- YOU CAN'T! YOU MUSTN'T!
And it came to pass...

THE FIRST SHARD --!
I FEEL ITS POWER -- FEEL IT RESONATING WITH THE POWER WE THREE ALREADY CARRY...
THIS IS WHAT WE WERE MEANT TO DO -- TO BRING THE SHARDS HERE -- TO FIND THEM, TO UNITE THEM...
THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY PURPOSE -- OUR PURPOSE...
no...
THE POWER MUST BE WIELDED BY ONE WHO HAS TURNED FROM PRIDE -- BY ONE WHO STRIVES FOR OTHERS, NOT HIMSELF --
IN YOUR HANDS, IT WOULD BE CORRUPTED -- YOU WOULD FALL TO THE DARKNESS, BECOME PART OF IT --
NO... PLEASE...

THE THIRD SHARD -- IT MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE OTHERS -- UNITED WITH THEM...
NO, IT'S --
I CAN'T -- I WAS TO BE THE SAVIOR -- I CAN'T JUST GO BACK --
-- CAN'T JUST BE A -- A HUMAN AGAIN --
AND NOW -- HAL? CHUCK?
WE'RE WITH YOU.
DO IT.
GOD, MOTHER AND COUNTRY -- !

LET THE CORE BE EXPOSED! COME FORTH, HEART OF DARKNESS!
COME FORTH -- AND DO BATTLE!
I -- I BROUGHT THIS ABOUT -- I MADE THIS HAPPEN. I WAS -- AN INSTRUMENT OF DESTINY, NO MORE.
HAD I NOT DONE WHAT I DID -- GATHERED THE POWER, BROUGHT THE FRAGMENTS TOGETHER -- PAVED THE WAY FOR THE SAVIOR --
-- EARTH WOULD BE DOOMED! IT WAS MY DESTINY!
YEAH? WELL, YOU CAN TRY THAT OUT ON A JURY, I GUESS --
-- BUT ME, I'M FIGURING THAT LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE IS YOUR DESTINY, TOO...

And It Came To Pass...
... that the shards were united, and their power wielded by one who did battle not for himself, but for his world.
For all the worlds that were threatened by the darkness.
And the darkness swept over him, and the darkness overwhelmed him... stabbing at his mind, seeking to seduce him with promises, with lies...
But he knew the hollowness of such promises, knew the paths they led to...
And as his flesh was burned and torn by the darkness, in its rage...
... his heart proved unassailable. And when the darkness was fully about him, sunk deep into his body...
... he blazed forth with the power within him.
Burning with a pure, clear light. Burning with true purpose. And the darkness shrieked. And the darkness burned.
And in the end...
IT IS DONE.

THANKS, TRIATHLON. THE EARTH OWES YOU A GREAT DEBT.
NO DEBT, CAP. WE WERE GLAD TO HELP.
AND EVEN THOUGH THE TRIPLE-EVIL IS NO MORE --
-- WE CAN STILL FEEL THE ESSENCE OF THE BEINGS WHOSE POWER IT STOLE -- FEEL THEIR PAIN, THEIR LOSS. IT KILLED SO MANY...
ALL THAT POWER... IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE. SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE...
OH, PUT A SOCK IN IT, YOU.
AND IT'S WHAT STILL POWERS THIS PYRAMID, RIGHT? CAN YOU TAP INTO IT -- USE IT TO RECREATE OUR SHIP, OR GET US BACK TO EARTH? KANG IS --
WE CAN TRY. PERHAPS IF --
CAPTAIN!
PARDON THE INTERRUPTION -- BUT NOW THAT THE PYRAMID'S ENERGY-SHIELDS ARE DOWN, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE RADIO CONTACT WITH EARTH.
WHEN WE WERE CAUGHT IN THAT ILLUSION-CHAMBER -- IT MUST HAVE HELD US FOR FAR LONGER THAN WE ASSUMED.
WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOR WEEKS, CAPTAIN, AND IN THAT TIME --
-- EARTH HAS SURRENDERED TO KANG!

AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS: AN AVENGERS SPOTLIGHT ON WONDER MAN AND THE SCARLET WITCH:
PRISONERS
A LOVE STORY
THEY TAKE ME TO LOS ANGELES.
EVERYTHING -- EVERYTHING SEEMS TO HAVE HAPPENED SO FAST --
REGULAR WRITER: KURT BUSIEK
GUEST PENCILER: BRENT ANDERSON
GUEST LEGEND: TOM PALMER COLORS: TOM SMITH
LETTERS: RS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE
SUMERAK/YOUNGQUIST ASSISTANT EDITORS
TOM BREVOORT EDITOR QUESADA CHIEF
BILL JEMAS TAKES NO PRISONERS

IT STARTED -- OR ENDED, THAT MIGHT BE MORE APPROPRIATE -- WHEN KANG DESTROYED WASHINGTON.
MOVE, YOU!
NNH!
I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT -- SOME SORT OF FUTURE-WEAPON FROM HIS TIME, IT MUST'VE BEEN -- BUT IT LEFT MOST OF THE BUILDINGS STANDING --
-- WHILE KILLING EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN THE CITY.
THEY HAD NO CHANCE, NO HOPE OF ESCAPE. THEY WERE DEAD IN SECONDS.
THEN KANG'S IMAGE APPEARED, OVER EVERY CITY IN THE WORLD --
THE AVENGERS DEFIED MY ORDER TO KEEP THE BATTLE -- OUR WAR FOR DOMINION OF THE EARTH -- ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
THEY ASSAULTED MY COMMAND CENTER --
-- AND NOW THE COUNTRY THAT HARBORS THEM HAS PAID THE PRICE.
AND THE WORLD HAS SEEN ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER AT MY COMMAND. SO I OFFER YOU A CHOICE. YOU MAY WISH TO SURRENDER --
-- LEST YOU FEAR SUCH POWER BEING TURNED AGAINST YOU.
MANY NATIONS SURRENDERED WITHIN DAYS.
BUT KANG MADE THE WASP, ACTING FOR THE AVENGERS, SURRENDER FIRST. SHE HAD NO CHOICE -- SHE COULDN'T RISK HIM HITTING NEW YORK NEXT, OR L.A.
STILL, THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN GOTTEN TO SAFETY, AND SHE WOULDN'T DIVULGE HIS LOCATION.

NOT EVERYONE ACCEPTED THE SURRENDER, OF COURSE --
-- AND KANG "PACIFIED" REBELS IN NUMEROUS CITIES.
AND THE WAR WENT ON IN THE UNSURRENDERED NATIONS. KANG DIDN'T USE THE CITY-KILLER ON THEM, PREFERRING TO FIGHT THEM HEAD-TO-HEAD --
-- BUT HE DID SAY THAT ANY SURRENDERED NATION THAT TOOK UP ARMS AGAINST HIM WOULD FEEL THE BOMBS AS RETRIBUTION.
AS FOR THE WORLD'S SUPER HEROES, SOME WERE CAPTURED -- OR SURRENDERED TO SAVE INNOCENTS FROM DEATH --
SOME MANAGED TO STAY FREE --
AND SOME --

-- WELL, SOME STAYED FREE FOR A WHILE, ONLY TO BE BROUGHT DOWN EVENTUALLY...
"WONDER MAN," THEY CALLED YOU. HAH!
SOME WONDER YOU ARE NOW, EH?
DO NOT MOVE. THE COSMI-STOCKS ARE BEING REPLACED BY A SUPPRESSOR-COLLAR, TO INHIBIT YOUR TRANSHUMAN ABILITIES.
ATTEMPT TO BREAK FREE --
-- AND YOU DIE.
AND WITH THAT -- AND WITH ONE FINAL SHOVE -- THEY SEND ME STUMBLING OUT INTO THE MAIN YARD.
A PRISON CAMP. FOR THOSE WHO RESISTED THE NEW REGIME. THEY LOOK AT ME WARILY.
THEY'RE HUNGRY.
DIRTY.
SCARED.
SIMON?!
HM?
OH, SIMON!
WANDA -- I DIDN'T KNOW YOU'D BE HERE...!
I WAS TAKEN OUT IN SPACE... THEY SHIPPED ME DOWN HERE, WEEKS AGO...

I WAS CAUGHT WHILE MAKING A RAID -- STEALING FOOD AND SUPPLIES FOR A REBEL GROUP I'D BEEN WORKING WITH IN THE HILLS.
I TRIED TO COVER THEIR ESCAPE --
OH, I'M JUST SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU ALIVE -- !
THE NEXT DAY, WE SETTLE INTO ROUTINE... WHAT ROUTINE THERE IS.
THE GUARDS AREN'T WORKING US -- JUST STORING US. UNTIL KANG'S DONE CONQUERING, I GUESS.
ANYWAY, WANDA SPENDS HER TIME IN THE MEDICAL TENTS, DOING WHAT SHE CAN --
JUST DO YOUR BEST TO HANG ON, BRADLEY. THE DOCTOR WE HAVE -- HE'S WORKING HARD --
-- HE'LL BE HERE AS SOON AS HE CAN --
I DO MY BEST TO HELP OUT. FETCH WATER, CARRY FOOD -- WHAT THEY PROVIDE FOR THE SICK, AND WHAT WE HEALTHY PRISONERS CAN SPARE --
-- WHATEVER.
I CAN SEE HOW HARD IT IS ON HER.
MY HEX-POWERS STILL WORK -- AT LEAST A LITTLE. I THINK IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE MAGIC, AND THE SUPPRESSOR-COLLAR'S TECHNOLOGY CAN'T BLOCK IT ALL.
I'VE GOT A TRICKLE OF IT -- I USE IT TO KEEP SOME OF THE WORST CASES ALIVE UNTIL THEY CAN BE TREATED...
SOMETIMES I HALF THINK THE CAMP AUTHORITIES KNOW I'M DOING IT, AND THEY LET IT GO. THEY'D RATHER HAVE LIVE SLAVES FOR KANG THAN CORPSES.
SO AS LONG AS I'M NOT TOO SHOWY, THEY LOOK THE OTHER WAY...

A FEW DAYS LATER, THERE'S SOME EXCITEMENT --
HAH! SKIMMED TOO LOW, YOU BASTARD!
SO HOW D'YOU LIKE THIS, HANH?
DO IT, GORDIE! GO! GO!
ALL RIGHT!
DID YOU SEE THAT? WAY TO GO, GUYS -- WAY TO SHOW 'EM!
OH, NO!
NO, THEY DIDN'T--!
HUH? WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, WANDA? THEY TOOK THAT GUARD DOWN CLEAN AS ANYTHING -- THEY'RE ALREADY OVER THE WALL!
THEY WON'T GET FAR.
AND EVEN IF THEY DID --
-- JUST WATCH.

"JUST WATCH."
ATTENTION, PRISONER-DESIGNATE GORDON MICHAELSON, PRISONER-DESIGNATE LUIS FERNANDEZ --
SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY, AND NO ONE WILL BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR ACTIONS BUT YOU YOURSELVES.
CONTINUE YOUR ATTEMPT TO FLEE -- AND PRISONERS-DESIGNATE RAYMOND CAMPELL AND CONSTANCE BURKHALTER WILL DIE IN YOUR STEAD.
NO --
NO --
NO -- WE WON'T GO BACK!
WON'T BE TAKEN!
HUH? WHAT'RE THEY --
WE'LL GET FREE -- JOIN THE REBELS--!
OH, NO...
POOM
POOM

THE ESCAPEES ARE CAUGHT. AND THEN FOUR MORE PRISONERS ARE CHOSEN --
WANDA TELLS ME IT'S ALWAYS DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF WHOEVER TRIES TO RUN, IF THEY KEEP RUNNING AFTER THE WARNING --
YOU -- YOU DID THIS! YOU!
THAT WAS MY DAUGHTER THEY DRAGGED OUT AFTER YOU! MY CONNIE!
SHE WAS ONLY 14 -- !
I'M -- I'M SORRY --
I COULDN'T -- COULDN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE --
CH-CHK
DOOM
DOOM
DOOM
DOOM
DOOM
DOOM

TWO NIGHTS LATER --
LOOK AT IT.
IT'S THE SAME MOON IT WAS A MONTH AGO. BUT THE WORLD IT SHINES DOWN ON -- IT'S SO DIFFERENT.
AND I DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL EVER -- EVER BE --
WANDA.
WANDA, SHHH. DON'T TALK LIKE THAT. DON'T THINK LIKE THAT.
THINGS WILL GET BETTER. KANG WILL BE BEATEN.
THE RESISTANCE IS OUT THERE -- INCLUDING SOME AVENGERS, EVEN THOR. THE PRESIDENT'S STILL FREE.
THINGS'LL BE OKAY. YOU'LL SEE.
OH, SIMON...

WANDA?
WANDA, WHAT'S WRONG?
OH, SIMON. IT WAS EASY BEFORE.
THINGS WERE... COMFORTABLE, AND IT SEEMED ALL RIGHT TO BE... TO BE COMFORTABLE. BUT NOW, WITH ALL THIS GOING ON --
-- WITH THE WORLD LIKE IT IS, IT JUST SEEMS SO --
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY IT --
WHAT WE HAD -- IT'S OVER. THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN, RIGHT? IT'S BEEN OVER FOR A WHILE, BUT WE PRETENDED --
-- AND NOW IT SEEMS WRONG TO PRETEND --
-- TO BE ANYTHING BUT HONEST WITH EACH OTHER --
YOU -- YOU UNDERSTAND? I WAS SO AFRAID --
YES, I UNDERSTAND. I JUST DIDN'T KNOW -- DIDN'T KNOW YOU FELT THIS WAY, TOO.

THINGS WERE FINE IN NEW YORK -- WE WERE TOGETHER, AND WE WERE GOOD FOR ONE ANOTHER. BUT THINGS HAPPENED, AND TIME PASSED --
-- AND WHEN WE HAD TO SEPARATE -- ME TO L.A., YOU STILL IN NEW YORK --
-- IT DIDN'T REALLY BOTHER YOU, DID IT?
... NO. NO, IT DIDN'T.
I DID LOVE YOU, SIMON. I STILL DO. BUT WHEN WE FIRST GOT TOGETHER...
I WAS SO LONELY, SO CONFUSED. THAT INTENSIFIED IT, MAGNIFIED MY FEELINGS...
FOR SO LONG, I COULDN'T TELL YOU.
HOW DO YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO LOVED YOU EVEN BEYOND DEATH THAT, WELL, THANKS, BUT...
AND YOU -- YOU BROUGHT ME BACK TO LIFE. TO LIFE.
IT WOULD HAVE SEEMED SO... UNGRATEFUL...
IT TURNED LOVE INTO PASSION.
SOMETHING WE BOTH FELT, BUT SOMETHING THAT BURNED OUT TOO FAST.
FOR ME, I GUESS, IT WAS THAT YOU'D ALWAYS BEEN THE PERFECT, UNATTAINABLE WOMAN...
I'D DIE FOR YOU, SIMON. YOU KNOW THAT. I DO LOVE YOU.
AND I LOVE YOU TOO. IT'S JUST -- WHAT IT TURNED OUT TO BE --
-- IT WASN'T THE KIND OF LOVE EITHER OF US THOUGHT. MORE LIKE --
MORE LIKE WHAT WE REALLY ARE IS OLD, OLD FRIENDS.
YOU KNOW, I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.

AND SHE LAUGHS. A QUIET, RUEFUL LAUGH.
BUT STILL --
-- IT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING I'VE HEARD IN WEEKS.
AND... THE VISION?
DO YOU STILL LOVE HIM?
YES. YES, I THINK SO.
BUT HE'S MOVED ON. AND THAT'S GOOD -- THAT'S GOOD FOR HIM. I'LL HONOR THAT.
AND YOU? IS THERE SOMEBODY?
NO. BUT IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW IS HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF HERE.
GET OUT? BUT --
YOUR POWERS. YOU SAID THEY'RE ONLY A TRICKLE, BUT MAYBE THEY'D BE ENOUGH TO OVERCOME MY COLLAR.
I CAN BREAK FREE, FREE YOU...
BUT EVEN IF WE COULD --
WE CAN'T TAKE THE WHOLE CAMP WITH US. AND EVEN THEN, HE'S GOT AN ENTIRE COUNTRY HOSTAGE...

THE NEXT DAY --
EVERYTHING'S NORMAL. JUST ANOTHER DAY IN SUNNY SO-CAL.
ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE.
NOW!
GO, WANDA! GO!
MY COLLAR'S NEXT.
AUH!
AND WHILE WANDA GROUNDS THE SECTOR GUARDS --
WKAMM
-- WE'RE GOING TO NEED AN EXIT.
A NICE, BIG HOLE.

WE COULDN'T SEE WHAT WAS OUTSIDE THE WALLS, NOT BEFORE WE MADE OUR MOVE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
GUARDS OUTSIDE, JUST LIKE WE THOUGHT.
THEY'RE WELL-TRAINED. FAST.
BUT THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE US ANY TROUBLE. ARE THEY?
HARDLY.
BUT --
ATTENTION, PRISONER-DESIGNATE WONDER MAN --
WH--?
-- PRISONER-DESIGNATE SCARLET WITCH --

NO... NO!
I'M SORRY. SIMON... I CAN'T DO IT! I JUST CAN'T!
I SURRENDER -- I SURRENDER!
PUNISH ME -- KILL ME -- BUT DON'T HURT ANYONE ELSE!
SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY, PRISONER-DESIGNATE WONDER MAN -- AND NO ONE WILL BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR ACTIONS BUT YOU YOURSELF.
CONTINUE YOUR ATTEMPT TO FLEE --
COME AND TAKE ME!
YOU'RE SO TOUGH, YOU'RE SO POWERFUL -- COME TAKE ME YOURSELVES! BE MEN! MEN, NOT COWARDS HIDING BEHIND THREATS!
TAKE ME IF YOU CAN -- BUT COME AT ME, NOT SOMEONE ELSE!

THEY COME AT ME.
A SPECIAL SQUAD, LOOKS LIKE.
WELL, LET 'EM.
YOU WATCHING, KANG? YOU SEEING THIS?
THIS IS HOW A MAN FIGHTS, KANG! HOW A MAN DEALS WITH HIS ENEMIES!
FACE TO FACE!
THEY MAY BE DESIGNED TO BEAT ME, BUT THEY NEVER FOUGHT ME BEFORE.
I HIT THEM HARDER THAN THEY WERE EXPECTING. AND I DON'T LET UP.
FOR A MINUTE THERE, I EVEN THINK I MIGHT WIN.
NO WEASELING, KANG! NO HIDING BEHIND HOSTAGES!

BUT THEN -- SOME SORT OF ENERGY-CANNON ON THE CAMP WALLS --
UHK!
HK
HKH
MAYBE IT'S GOT SOMETHING IN IT LIKE THE SUPPRESSOR-COLLARS.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT RIPS RIGHT THROUGH ME --
I CAN'T BREATHE --
CAN'T MOVE --
AND THEY COME AT ME AGAIN.
YOU... YOU WATCHING, KANG...?
IT DOESN'T LAST VERY LONG AFTER THAT.
IT DOESN'T LAST VERY LONG AT ALL.

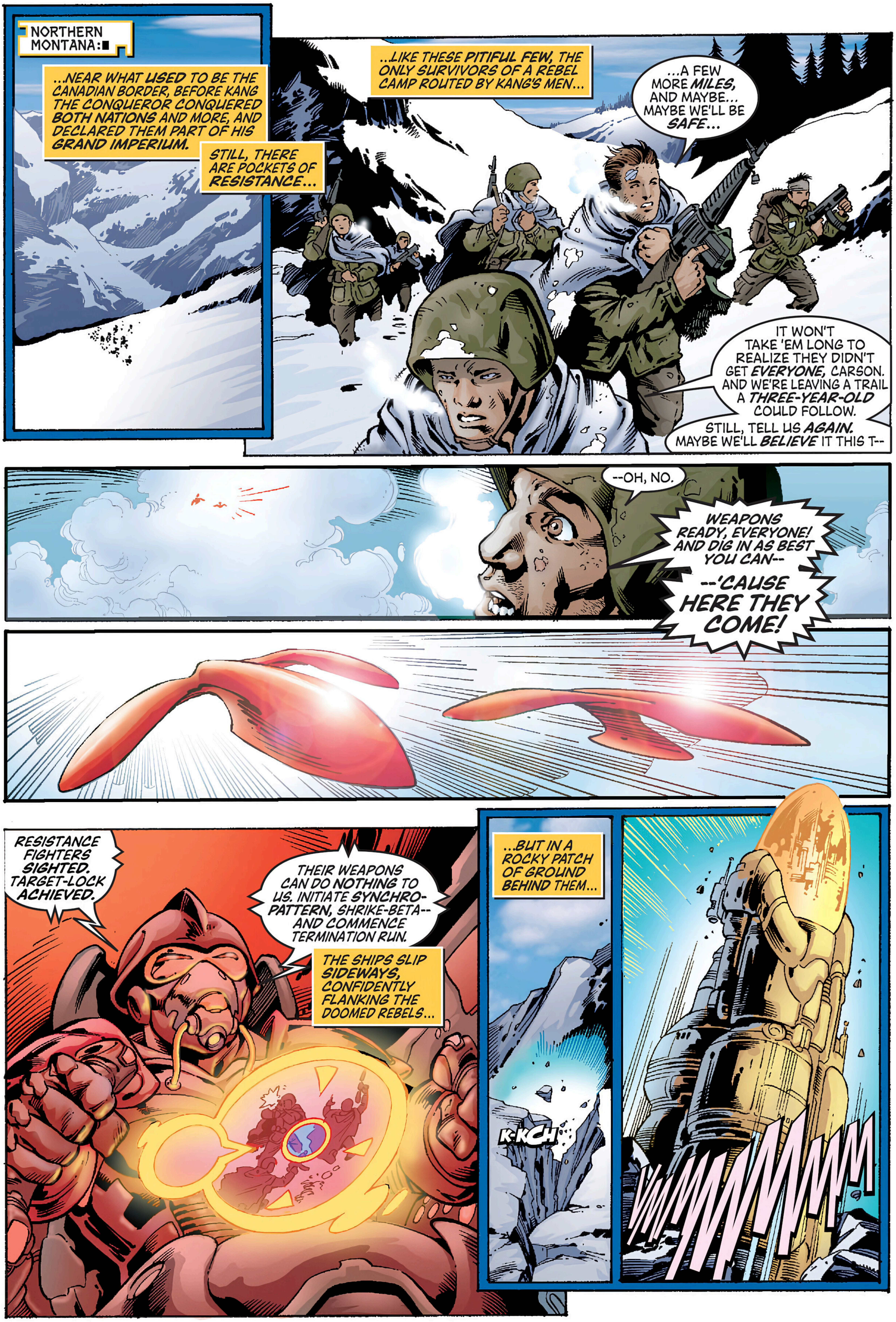
S-SIMON...?
HOLD HIM UP. KEEP HIM AWAKE.
THE CONQUEROR HAS GIVEN THE ORDER -- HE WISHES TO SPEAK TO THIS ONE, BEFORE PUNISHMENT.
YOU ARE DEFEATED, WONDER MAN. BUT YOU FOUGHT BRAVELY, AND I ADMIRE COURAGE... EVEN IN MY ENEMIES.
BECAUSE YOU DID NOT SURRENDER, YOU WILL BE EXECUTED.
BUT BECAUSE YOU DID NOT FLEE, BUT FACED MY MEN LIKE A WARRIOR, YOU WILL BE EXECUTED ALONE. NO OTHERS WILL DIE ALONGSIDE YOU.
THE WOMAN WILL BE PLACED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR ONE MONTH, AFTER THE EXECUTION.
THAT'S ALL HE SAYS. JUST PRONOUNCES SENTENCE, AND THEN IN A FLICKER OF STATIC, THE IMAGE IS GONE.
BUT THAT'S OKAY.
IT'S WHAT I EXPECTED OF SOMEONE LIKE HIM. WHAT I WAS HOPING FOR, FRANKLY.
I WONDER WHAT IT'LL LOOK LIKE TO THE PEOPLE WATCHING? JUST AN EXPLOSION OF IONIC ENERGY, PROBABLY.
CH-CHK
AN EXPLOSION OF ENERGY, AND THEN --
PLEASE -- PLEASE, DON'T DO THIS --
FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T KILL HIM -- !

PTOOM

YOU -- YOU DID IT, YOU HEARTLESS MONSTERS --
YOU KILLED HIM--!
UP, PRISONER-DESIGNATE SCARLET WITCH. YOU ARE TO BE CONFINED IN SOLITARY NOW.
JUST... JUST A MOMENT...
I SAID UP, WOMAN.
AND I SAID I'LL GO IN A MINUTE, YOU MURDERER! JUST GIVE ME --
-- GIVE ME A FEW SECONDS TO GRIEVE...!
NOT TREATING MY FAVORITE GIRL RIGHT, ARE THEY?
WANT ME TO KLONK THEIR HEADS TOGETHER FOR THEM?
THAT -- WON'T BE NECESSARY, SIMON.
BUT IT'S NICE TO HEAR YOUR VOICE...
SO. YOU THINK THAT'D WORK?
IT WAS A DANGEROUS PLAN...

...ALL THE MORE SO BECAUSE IT RISKED INNOCENT LIVES...
Y-YES... IT SHOULD. IT SHOULD.
IF I PUT THE RIGHT SPELL ON YOU WHILE MY COLLAR'S INACTIVE, THEN EVEN IF THEY PUT A NEW COLLAR ON YOU, IT WON'T WORK. AT LEAST, NOT RIGHT AWAY.
AND WHEN THEY SHOOT YOU...
IT WORKED -- JUST LIKE WE PLANNED.
MY IONIC POWERS PROTECTED ME FROM THE BLAST, AND WANDA'S SPELL --
YOU COULD COME TOO.
WE COULD RIG IT SO THAT YOU TURN INVISIBLE TOO -- SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE VAPORIZED WHEN I "EXPLODE"...
NO. I CAN'T.
THE ONLY WAY IT WOULDN'T LOOK SUSPICIOUS IS IF I WAS THERE NEXT TO YOU...
...AND THE RISK IS TOO GREAT THAT KANG WILL GO IN FOR REPRISALS IF MORE THAN ONE OF US SHOWS THAT KIND OF DEFIANCE
IN YOU, HE'LL HONOR IT. I HOPE.
BUT IN A WOMAN? WE CAN'T TAKE THAT CHANCE.
BESIDES, MY PLACE IS HERE.
I CAN HELP PEOPLE -- PEOPLE WHO BADLY NEED IT. HELP KEEP THEM ALIVE UNTIL THEY CAN BE FREED.
SOMEONE SHOULD STAY TO DO THAT...

WANDA, I --
FIND THE RESISTANCE, SIMON. FIND THE AVENGERS. AND SAVE THE WORLD.
ALL OF US HERE -- ALL OF US EVERYWHERE -- WE'LL BE COUNTING ON YOU.
THERE'S A NICE BIG HOLE IN THE WALL. THEY'VE POSTED GUARDS THERE, BUT THEY DON'T SEE ME.
AND THEY HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO REPAIR THE SENSORS IN THE WALLS YET.
I'M OUT. I'M FREE.
GODSPEED, SIMON...
I LOOK BACK, ONE LAST TIME. AND I TAKE A DEEP BREATH...
...AND I GO.
FOR BIG JOHN.


NORTHERN MONTANA:
...NEAR WHAT USED TO BE THE CANADIAN BORDER, BEFORE KANG THE CONQUEROR CONQUERED BOTH NATIONS AND MORE, AND DECLARED THEM PART OF HIS GRAND IMPERIUM.
STILL, THERE ARE POCKETS OF RESISTANCE...
...LIKE THESE PITIFUL FEW, THE ONLY SURVIVORS OF A REBEL CAMP ROUTED BY KANG'S MEN...
...A FEW MORE MILES, AND MAYBE... MAYBE WE'LL BE SAFE...
IT WON'T TAKE 'EM LONG TO REALIZE THEY DIDN'T GET EVERYONE, CARSON. AND WE'RE LEAVING A TRAIL A THREE-YEAR-OLD COULD FOLLOW.
STILL, TELL US AGAIN. MAYBE WE'LL BELIEVE IT THIS T--
--OH, NO.
WEAPONS READY, EVERYONE! AND DIG IN AS BEST YOU CAN--
--'CAUSE HERE THEY COME!
RESISTANCE FIGHTERS SIGHTED. TARGET-LOCK ACHIEVED.
THEIR WEAPONS CAN DO NOTHING TO US. INITIATE SYNCHRO-PATTERN, SHRIKE-BETA-- AND COMMENCE TERMINATION RUN.
THE SHIPS SLIP SIDEWAYS, CONFIDENTLY FLANKING THE DOOMED REBELS...
...BUT IN A ROCKY PATCH OF GROUND BEHIND THEM...
K-KCH
VMMMMMMMM

AND--
WRITER: KURT BUSIEK GUEST PENCILER: IVAN REIS
GUEST INKER: RANDY EMBERLIN
COLORS: TOM SMITH
VIP VIP
KOOM
KOOM
W-WHAT--?
THEY-- THEY JUST--
"IT WORKED GOOD. ALL RIGHT, FOLKS-- LET'S MOVE ON TO THE NEXT STAGE--"
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
CENTRAL SIBERIA, NORTH OF YAKUTSK:
AH, JUST LOOK AT IT, MARCUS.
THEIR DEFENSES SHATTERED, THEIR LINES BROKEN-- AND NOW THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR THEM BUT FLIGHT.
IT IS POETRY-- GLORIOUS, EPIC POETRY.
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN:
COUNTER ATTACK
LETTERS: RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S SAIDA!
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

THIS IS THE TRUE THRILL.
NOT MERELY CRUSHING ONE'S FOES, BUT MEETING THEM HEAD TO HEAD-- BESTING THEM THROUGH STRATEGY, THROUGH THE CAREFUL ARRANGEMENT OF ONE'S FORCES ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
IT IS NOT LONG, IN THIS TIME PERIOD, SINCE RUSSIA CONSIDERED HERSELF PROTECTED BY HER OWN VAST SIZE--
--BY THE TOLL OF THE LONG MARCHES AND EXTENDED SUPPLY LINES PROVING FATAL TO ANY INVADER.
NOT SO HERE, HOWEVER-- AND IT COSTS THEM--
MILORD KANG! MILORD SCARLET CENTURION!
DIRE NEWS!
EH?
IT HAD BETTER BE IMPORTANT NEWS INDEED, SERVITOR, FOR WHOMEVER SENT YOU TO DISTRACT MY SON AND I FROM--
IT IS A CODE-THREE ALERT, SIRE! THERE IS TROUBLE-- GRAVE TROUBLE--
"--AT THE IMPERIAL PRISON!"
STRIKE FIERCELY, AVENGERS! THOU ART ALMOST THROUGH!
SHAMMM
KOOM
AND THESE FELLAS AREN'T GOING TO BE GIVING US ANY MORE TROUBLE, THOR-- ARE YOU, BOYS?
DIDN'T THINK SO.
SO LET'S MOVE ON TO--

JAN!
THAT PSYCHO ACTUALLY TRUSSED YOU UP-- LIKE A BEAST OF BURDEN?!
HE-- HE LIKES TO HAVE EXTRA SECURITY WHEN HE'S NOT IN THE AREA.
BUT WHAT--?
DON'T WORRY, HON. EVEN NOW, OTHER SQUADS ARE FREEING THE REST OF THE CAPTIVE HEROES. NOBODY STAYS IN KANG'S CLUTCHES.
BUT-- BUT YOU CAN'T--!
YOU DON'T DARE RESCUE ME-- OR ANY OF US!
DON'T YOU SEE? I SURRENDERED ON BEHALF OF THE AVENGERS, AS A GROUP! IF I'M FREED, IF WE STRIKE BACK-- KANG ONLY KEEPS THE KID GLOVES ON AS LONG AS THE OTHER SIDE PLAYS BY HIS RULES!
IF WE BREAK THE SURRENDER, HE'LL RETALIATE-- MURDER ENTIRE CITIES, LIKE HE DID TO WASHINGTON D.C.!
IT'S OKAY, JAN. IT'S OKAY.
YELLOWJACKET SPEAKS SOOTH, MILADY WASP. WE STAND PREPARED-- READY TO FIGHT BACK 'GAINST THE TYRANT KANG.
MERELY STEP THROUGH THE PORTAL I HAVE CREATED WITH THE ENCHANTMENTS OF MY MYSTIC HAMMER--
--AND THOU WILT SEE.
NORTHERN CANADA:
THE HIDDEN FORMER BASE OF THE SELF-STYLED MASTER OF THE WORLD.
...SEE, JAN? THE BASE IS STILL SHIELDED FROM KANG'S SENSORS--

--BUT WE'VE FINALLY CRACKED THE MASTER'S TECHNOLOGY! HIS WEAPONRY CUT THROUGH KANG'S DEFENSES IN BOSTON--
--AND NOW IT'LL DO IT AGAIN-- FOR US!
IT... SEEMS LIKE A MIRACLE, HANK...
WELL, I WON'T SAY IT WASN'T TRICKY.
THE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY COULD ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD BY A GENIUS, A TOP BRAIN, A PARAGON OF SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT...
...WHICH MEANS OF COURSE, THAT IT WAS MOSTLY TONY STARK'S DOING...
DON'T LET HIM KID YOU, JAN-- IT WAS A TEAM EFFORT. HANK, STINGRAY, THE BLACK KNIGHT--
--THE TECHNOLOGY IS SO ALIEN THAT WE NEEDED ALL THE PERSPECTIVES WE COULD GET.
BUT HERE, LET ME SHOW YOU...
THE MASTER'S TECHNOLOGY IS QUASI-ORGANIC-- IT CAN "GROW," REPLICATING ITSELF FROM RAW MATERIALS IT HARVESTS FROM THE EARTH'S CRUST.
THERE'S ALREADY A NETWORK OF IT BENEATH ALL OF NORTH AMERICA--
--ALLOWING US TO ACTIVATE THE DORMANT RING-WALLS HE CREATED, AS WELL AS CREATE MORE OF THEM-- ATTACKING FROM EVERYWHERE AT ONCE.
BUT HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE? KANG DID BREAK THROUGH THE WASHINGTON RING-WALL...
IT WAS OPERATING ON AUTOMATIC-- THE MASTER WASN'T THERE TO COMPENSATE FOR KANG'S ATTACKS.
STILL, IF WE MAKE THIS MOVE, AND WE'RE WRONG-- HOW MANY WILL SUFFER?
HOW MANY WILL DIE, IF WE FAIL AGAIN?
WE HAVE TO RISK IT, MS. VAN DYNE.
WE HAVE TO PAY ANY PRICE, IF THE PRIZE IS FREEDOM.
WHO--?

OH!
YOUR SURRENDER, EARLIER-- IT WAS A NOBLE THING. YOU DID IT TO SAVE LIVES, AND YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE. NOT THEN.
BUT NOW-- IF THERE'S HOPE, EVEN THE FAINTEST HOPE...
I...
YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. PRESIDENT. AND WE'LL DO IT-- WE'LL STRIKE BACK.
BUT NOT ALONE.
WE'LL PLAN THE STRIKE FOR THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT-- BUT IT'LL HAVE TO BE TOMORROW.
TONIGHT, I'VE GOT TO MAKE SOME CALLS, CALL IN A FEW FAVORS...
...AND WITH THAT, I'D BETTER GET TO IT. TIME'S SHORT, AND THERE'S A LOT TO DO.
OF COURSE, AVENGER.
THEY'RE RIGHT... ALL OF THEM. THIS IS OUR BEST CHANCE. MAYBE OUR ONLY CHANCE.
STILL, I'D FEEL A LOT MORE CONFIDENT IF CAPTAIN AMERICA WERE HERE. WITH HIM AND THE OTHERS MISSING IN SPACE ALL THIS TIME, MAYBE DEAD...
"...I JUST WISH HE WAS HERE, THAT'S ALL..."
CAN YOU DO IT, TRIATHLON?
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON:

...WHERE THE MISSING AVENGERS HAVE SEEN A TRIUMPH OVER A GREAT THREAT... AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF ONE OF THEIR OWN.
IT WAS URGENT THAT WE GET BACK TO EARTH BEFORE-- AND NOW AFTER BEING TRAPPED HERE FOR WEEKS--
--AND WITH WHAT THE VISION'S LEARNED OF THE SITUATION ON EARTH--
WE UNDERSTAND, CAP. WE'RE TRYING.
THEN KEEP AT IT, AVENGER.
WHEN YOU AND... YOUR SHARED SELVES HERE MANIFESTED LIKE THIS, YOU WERE ABLE TO CHANNEL ENOUGH POWER TO SHUT THIS PYRAMID DOWN.
IF YOU CAN USE THAT POWER TO CONTROL THE PYRAMID-- MAKE IT MOVE-- IF YOU CAN GET US BACK TO EARTH--
IF IT HELPS, TRI, WE'VE GOT SOME PRETTY EXPERIENCED ENERGY-WIELDERS HERE.
PHOTON, FIRESTAR, THE LIVING LIGHTNING, AND I-- IF YOU CAN LINK US TOGETHER, DRAW ON OUR ABILITIES--
THANKS, QUASAR... BUT THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
I'M STILL NOT USED TO BEING... WIRED INTO THE 3-D MAN AND HIS BROTHER LIKE THIS, BUT WE'VE BEEN REACHING OUT...
...INTO THE MASS OF STOLEN ENERGIES THE TRIPLE-EVIL USED TO POWER THIS THING...
...AND I THINK WE CAN...
...THERE! THE SHIELDS THAT PREVENTED DETECTION BY ANY BUT THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING ARE BACK UP NOW. AND...
AND SLOWLY, SLOWLY--

--THE GREAT BULK OF THE STAR-SPANNING PYRAMID BEGINS TO HUM, TO VIBRATE--
--AND TO MOVE.
CANADA:
YELLOWJACKET:
LOOK AT HER.
WE'VE ALL CHANGED A LOT, SINCE WE FOUNDED THIS TEAM, FOR GOOD AND BAD... I'VE HAD MY UPS AND DOWNS, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I THINK SHE'S CHANGED THE MOST, THOUGH-- AND IT'S ALL BEEN FOR THE GOOD.
THAT'S THE SUPREME MILITARY COMMANDER OF RUSSIA SHE'S ARGUING WITH, AND SHE'S NOT GIVING AN INCH. NOT AN INCH.
GOD, I LOVE THAT WOMAN.
IRON MAN:
BACK IN ACTION, TOMORROW MORNING. AND I CAN'T WAIT. AND I'M TERRIFIED.
I'VE BEEN ON THE SIDELINES FOR MOST OF THIS-- DOING SCIENTIFIC WORK AS TONY STARK. BUT NOW THAT I'M SUITING UP AGAIN...
...I'M READY FOR THIS BATTLE.
BUT IF WE FAIL... IF WE FAIL...
STINGRAY AND SILVERCLAW:
...NEVER BEEN MUCH OF AN ACTIVE HERO. I JUST... STUMBLED INTO IT. BUT THEY NEED US, SO I DO WHAT I CAN...
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
THIS IS ALL VERY NEW TO ME, AND I FEEL LIKE I BELONG IN COLLEGE, NOT HERE.
BUT WE DON'T GET TO CHOOSE WHEN TO BE READY, DO WE?
THE BLACK KNIGHT AND WARBIRD:
YOU'RE LOOKING SOMEWHAT... ADRIFT, CAROL.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

I KILLED THE MASTER, DANE. I THOUGHT IT WAS THE RIGHT MOVE... THE ONLY MOVE. BUT IF I HADN'T, HE'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RUN... ALL THIS.
WASHINGTON... IT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED. THEY'RE ALL DEAD, BECAUSE OF WHAT I--
DON'T THINK LIKE THAT.
THE MASTER'S PLANS-- THEY WOULD HAVE ENDED UP WITH EVEN MORE DEAD. YOU DID WHAT YOU FELT YOU... WHAT YOU HAD TO DO.
NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO LOOK BACK, BUT TO MOVE FORWARD.
SURE. FORWARD.
BUT FORWARD TO WHAT?
THOR:
AND FIREBIRD:
HOLA, THOR!
I SAW YOU WERE GONE. DID YOU COME OUT HERE FOR FRESH AIR...
...OR FOR SOME DISTANCE, TO SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM ALL THOSE MORTAL CONCERNS?
HM?

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE TOMORROW. MAYBE A LOT OF PEOPLE.
AND THEY'LL BE FIGHTING FOR WHAT THEY HOLD MOST DEAR-- FREEDOM, THEIR FAMILIES, THEIR LIVES. BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER TO YOU, DOES IT?
THEY'RE JUST MORTAL, AFTER ALL.
WOMAN...!
THEY'RE GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, RIGHT? NOW, OR DECADES FROM NOW, IT'S STILL JUST AN EYEBLINK TO YOU!
MAYBE THAT MAKES LOGICAL, INTELLECTUAL SENSE.
MAYBE IT'S BEST FOR YOU TO FLEE TO ASGARD WHEN THIS IS OVER, LIKE YOU SAID YOU WOULD... AVOID FORMING TIES WITH MORTALS.
AND MAYBE I'M IMMORTAL TOO, AND I'LL WATCH EVERYONE AROUND ME AGE AND DIE, EVERYONE I LOVE.
BUT I HOPE I'LL ALWAYS CARE. I HOPE THEY'LL ALWAYS MATTER TO ME-- THOSE LIVES, THOSE STRUGGLES, NO MATTER HOW BRIEF.
I'VE TRIED TO GET THROUGH TO YOU-- TRIED AND TRIED-- BUT YOU'RE A GOD, AND YOU'RE DIFFERENT.
SO YOU SAY.
BUT MY GOD NOTICES EVEN THE FALL OF A SPARROW, AND THAT'S THE GOD I'LL FOLLOW, THE GOD I'LL DO MY BEST TO EMULATE. NOT YOU.
NEVER YOU!

KANG'S RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED CITADEL ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD:
THE NEXT MORNING.
PEOPLE OF NORTH AMERICA!
I SPEAK TO YOU NOW BECAUSE YOUR HEROES HAVE BETRAYED YOU.
THE AVENGERS HAVE BROKEN THEIR SURRENDER, VIOLATED THEIR OATHS, AND INVADED IMPERIAL POSSESSIONS.
THEY WILL BE PUNISHED.
THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO SURRENDER ONCE MORE, AND BE EXECUTED--
--BUT NOT UNTIL AFTER TWO AMERICAN CITIES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED AS RETRIBUTION FOR THEIR TREACHERY--
--AND THEN EVERY HOUR THAT PASSES WITHOUT THEIR SURRENDER, ANOTHER CITY WILL FALL.
DENVER, ATLANTA-- MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH YOUR GODS.
YOUR HEROES HAVE BROUGHT THIS UPON YOU.
BUT EVEN AS KANG SPEAKS--
KRMMBBSHH
PATHAN'S HELLS!
ZAK ZAK
KROOOM
PROTECT THE CITADEL, DOGS! PROTECT THE CITADEL!

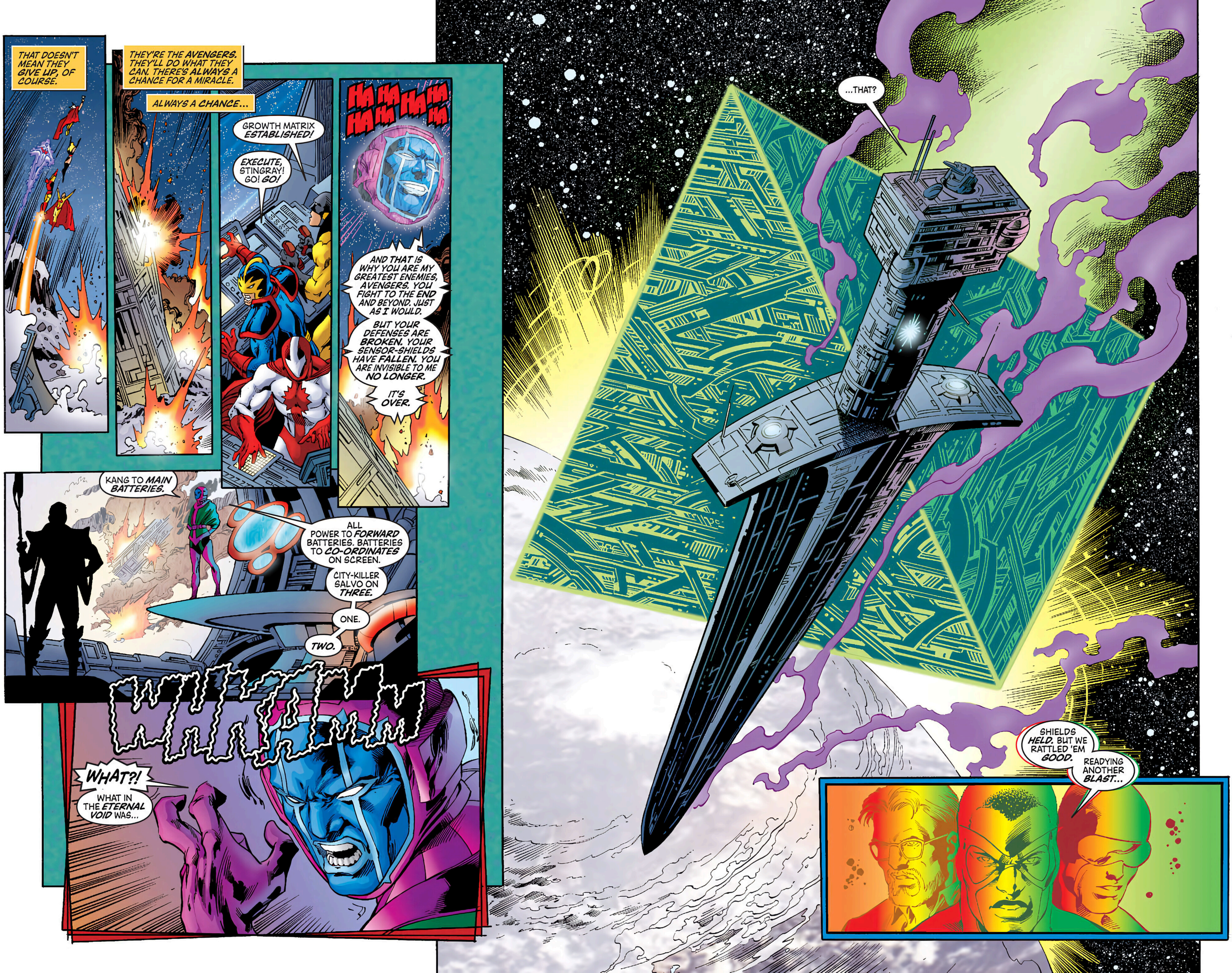
AND AS KANG'S STRONGHOLD COMES UNDER ATTACK, THEY RISE, ALL AROUND THE WORLD--
--THE RESULT OF THE WASP'S LONG NEGOTIATIONS!
IN JAPAN:
DEVIANTS!
BUT-- THEY KEEP TO THEMSELVES! TO THEIR CITY ON THE PACIFIC FLOOR! THEY DO NOT INTERFERE IN THE AFFAIRS OF HUMANS!
IN FRANCE:
FORWARD, ATLANTEANS!
YOU FOLLOWED THE USURPER ATTUMA-- NOW WIN BACK YOUR HONOR! YOUR HONOR--
--AND FREEDOM FOR THE SURFACEMEN!
AND IN RUSSIA:
NO! NO!
BY THE DARKEST NEBULAE! WHAT... WHAT IS THAT?!

SHE IS TANIA BELINSKY, ALSO KNOWN AS STARLIGHT. AND HE, SERGEI KRYLOV-- THE PRESENCE.
SO FEARED ARE THEY THROUGHOUT RUSSIA--
--THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE LOATHE TO FREE THEM, EVEN TO SAVE A WORLD.
THEY ARE BEINGS OF RAW ENERGY. RADIOACTIVITY PERSONIFIED.
THEIR POWER IS INCALCULABLE, THEIR TOUCH DEADLY. AND THEIR CONDITION...
...CONTAGIOUS.
ALL WHO FALL BEFORE THEM RISE AGAIN...
...AS SLAVES IN THEIR SERVICE.
THE EASTERN SEABORD:
THEY STRIKE FROM EVERYWHERE, MY LORD! ALL THE EXISTING WEAPON-WALLS PLUS MORE--
--THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE X-MEN, ALPHA FLIGHT--
ENOUGH!
I'LL HAVE A FULL REPORT FROM YOU SOON, BUT NOT NOW! PREPARE THE SHUTTLE, MY SON-- IMMEDIATELY--!
WE SHALL... WITHDRAW TO DAMOCLES BASE--
--AND MAKE OUR DISPLEASURE KNOWN FROM THERE!

ONE THING I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
MY STUDIES INDICATED THAT THE SO-CALLED MASTER OF THE WORLD WOULD NEVER DEIGN TO ALLY HIMSELF WITH THE AVENGERS--
--AND THAT HE COULD REPEL THEM EASILY, IF THEY TRIED TO TAKE HIS TECHNOLOGIES. HE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A FACTOR UNTIL MUCH LATER.
SO HOW DID THEY GAIN AN ADVANTAGE OVER HIM...?
I...
...I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO GUESS, OF COURSE.
YOU HAVE OFTEN PRAISED THEM AS RESOURCEFUL, HOWEVER. PERHAPS... IT IS AS SIMPLE AS THAT?
THE TIME-STRIDING CONQUEROR IS SILENT AT THAT--
--A SILENCE THAT LASTS ALL THE WAY TO DAMOCLES BASE.
ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE. WE'VE GOT A CHANCE.
A SLIM CHANCE. BUT A CHANCE.
KANG'S ARMIES ARE IN TURMOIL, AND FIGHTING ON MULTIPLE FRONTS-- THAT'LL TIE THEM UP FOR A WHILE AT LEAST.
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE OUT DAMOCLES BASE-- SHATTER ITS FORCE-FIELD. ONLY THE MASTER'S TECHNOLOGY HAS ANY HOPE OF DOING THAT.
YELLOWJACKET, THE BLACK KNIGHT AND STINGRAY WILL STAY HERE-- RUN THROUGH THE BOMBARDMENT CONFIGURATIONS WE THINK WILL WORK BEST--
--WHILE THOR, WONDER MAN, IRON MAN AND FIREBIRD WILL GET INTO POSITION TO ASSAULT THE BASE ONCE THE FIELD IS DOWN.
DEEP IN HER HEART, SHE KNOWS THIS WILL WORK. SHE CAN SEE IT, UNFOLDING JUST AS IT SHOULD-- JUST AS IT'S MEANT TO. VICTORY. AND FREEDOM.

SO IMAGINE HER DISAPPOINTMENT --
QUICKSILVER AND SILVERCLAW, YOU'LL REINFORCE HERCULES AND --
-- SHAUULHH!
WHAT --?
-- WHEN IT ALL GOES SOUR.
THE SCANNERS SAY THE SENSOR-SHIELDS ARE STILL WORKING --
-- BUT WE'RE UNDER ATTACK --
"-- FROM SPACE!"
YOU ARE FOOLS, AVENGERS -- FOOLS TO THINK I WOULD NOT BE PREPARED FOR THIS! YOUR BASE ITSELF MAY BE INVISIBLE TO ME --
-- BUT THE COMMANDS YOU ARE SENDING TO THE WEAPON-WALLS ALLOW ME TO TRACK YOU --
-- TRIANGULATE ON YOUR LOCATION!
I KNEW I WOULD FIGHT YOUR BASE'S OWNER IN TIME -- NOW I SIMPLY STRIKE EARLIER THAN PLANNED! DEVASTATE THE ENTIRE AREA --
-- AND YOU WILL INEVITABLY BE DESTROYED!
HE'S FIRING BLIND -- WE'VE STILL GOT A SHOT!
IRON MAN, HANK -- NO NEED TO BE COY! THE MAIN BATTERIES ARE PREPPED -- POWER UP, LOCK 'EM ON, AND --
ON IT, HON. JUST A FEW SECONDS...

THE BATTERIES HAVE BEEN LOCKED ON DAMOCLES BASE SINCE IT CAME OVER THE HORIZON. NOW, ENERGY FLOODS THEM, AS THEY GO WHITE-HOT, BLUE-HOT--
NO.
HE DIDN'T-- THEY DIDN'T--
GO, EVERYONE. DO...
...DO WHATEVER YOU CAN.
WE CAN "GROW" ANOTHER SET OF BATTERIES, WASP.
A DOZEN AT ONCE, IF NEEDED. MAYBE IT'LL STILL BE IN TIME...
...
YES, DANE. OF COURSE.
DO WHAT YOU CAN.
BUT SHE WATCHES THE DEVASTATION ABOVE, AND SHE KNOWS. THAT WAS THEIR CHANCE.
AND IT'S PASSED.


THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY GIVE UP, OF COURSE.
THEY'RE THE AVENGERS. THEY'LL DO WHAT THEY CAN. THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE FOR A MIRACLE.
ALWAYS A CHANCE...
GROWTH MATRIX ESTABLISHED!
EXECUTE, STINGRAY! GO! GO!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
AND THAT IS WHY YOU ARE MY GREATEST ENEMIES, AVENGERS. YOU FIGHT TO THE END AND BEYOND. JUST AS I WOULD.
BUT YOUR DEFENSES ARE BROKEN. YOUR SENSOR-SHIELDS HAVE FALLEN. YOU ARE INVISIBLE TO ME NO LONGER.
IT'S OVER.
KANG TO MAIN BATTERIES.
ALL POWER TO FORWARD BATTERIES. BATTERIES TO CO-ORDINATES ON SCREEN.
CITY-KILLER SALVO ON THREE.
ONE.
TWO.
WHRAMM
WHAT?!
WHAT IN THE ETERNAL VOID WAS...
...THAT?
SHIELDS HELD, BUT WE RATTLED 'EM GOOD.
READYING ANOTHER BLAST...

WAY TO GO, TRIATHLON!
THAT LET 'EM KNOW WE'RE HERE.
DRACCHAN'S TEETH! IS THERE NO END TO THESE INTERRUPTIONS?!
I'LL DEAL WITH THIS PERSONALLY, MARCUS. HAVE THE HOLO-PROJECTION CHAMBER PREPPED-- AND THE SIMULACRUM AT FULL WEAPONS POWER!
I'M ON MY WAY.
KLAK
SNEK
NOW!
NOW, AVENGERS--
IF OUR LAST ATTACK IS ANY INDICATOR, I THINK I KNOW WHAT'S COMING NEXT.
TRIATHLON, I'VE GOT AN IDEA. LET ME KNOW IF THE PYRAMID CAN DO THIS...

AND, OUTSIDE--
SIMULACRUM MANIFESTED. FULL WEAPONS POWER.
NO.
LARGER.
LARGER.
LARGER.
EVEN MY ADMIRATION OF YOUR TENACITY HAS ITS LIMITS, AVENGERS.
YOU THINK THIS FREAKISH, NOMADIC PYRAMID IS YOUR SALVATION? I FORESAW IT. I EVEN TOLD YOU OF IT.
DO YOUR WORST, IN THE MOMENTS YOU HAVE LEFT OF LIFE. I CAN COUNTER ALL OF YOUR NEW TOY'S CAPABILITIES!
EVEN THIS?
EH?

NOW, YOU MISERABLE, JACKED-UP LITTLE TIN HITLER...
...LET'S END THIS.

IN-SYSTEM SPACE. NEAR EARTH:
THEY ARE AWAY, CAPTAIN AMERICA...
...SOME OF THEM WILL REQUIRE PROPULSION ASSISTANCE FROM QUASAR, BUT THEY SHOULD REACH KANG'S BASE SWIFTLY.
WE, IN TURN, CONTINUE TO APPROACH AT...
UHH!
CAP?
CAP, ARE YOU OKAY?
HUH. HE'S BETTER THAN I REMEMBERED.
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, TRIATHLON --

-- I'LL BE FINE!
IT COMES DOWN TO THIS. THE AVENGERS BATTLE FOR EARTH.
KANG THE CONQUEROR, TIME-TRAVELING DESPOT FROM THE FUTURE, HAS INVADED THE EARTH OF THIS ERA -- AND CONQUERED MUCH OF IT.
ALL ATTEMPTS TO TOPPLE HIM HAVE FAILED.
BUT A SMALL GROUP OF AVENGERS FACED AND DEFEATED ANOTHER THREAT -- A VOID-WANDERING PYRAMID THAT SOUGHT TO DESTROY ALL IT ENCOUNTERED.
NOW, THE PYRAMID UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE FULLY-AWAKENED POWERS OF THE AVENGER TRIATHLON -- CHANNELING THE ENERGIES OF ALL THOSE FALLEN TO ITS ASSAULT FOR MILLENNIA --
-- THE AVENGERS FIGHT BACK.
BUT EVEN NOW -- EVEN THIS --
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN:
THE LAST CASTLE
KURT BUSIEK WRITER • ART: KIERON DWYER WITH RICK REMENDER
BACK IN HARNESS & READY TO RUMBLE
COLORS: TOM SMITH LETTERS: RS & COMICRAFT
MARC SUMERAK ASS'T EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

-- MAY BE TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.
PRELIMINARY SCANS ALMOST COMPLETE, SIRE.
INITIAL ANALYSIS INDICATES THAT THEY ARE USING THE INCHOATE ENERGIES WITHIN THE PYRAMID TO DUPLICATE OUR SIMULACRUM-PROJECTION TECHNOLOGY.
THOUGH HOW SKILLED CAN THEY --
ENOUGH, MARCUS. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THEM.
CAPTAIN AMERICA IS AN ASTOUNDING WARRIOR -- HE HAS NEVER FOUGHT UNDER THESE CONDITIONS BEFORE --
-- BUT ALREADY HE ADAPTS -- MASTERING THE FORM MORE COMPLETELY THAN MANY WHO'VE TRAINED FOR DECADES!
IT IS WHAT MAKES HIM SUCH A WORTHY FOE.
YOU WILL DEFEAT HIM EASILY, FATHER. THESE BACK-CENTURY PRIMITIVES...
...THEY ARE NO MATCH FOR KANG.
WRAMM
EH?
WH --?
FORCE-SHIELD COMMANDER! DEFENSE REPORT -- NOW!

WE ARE UNDER ASSAULT, MILORD CENTURION... FROM THE PLANET BELOW.
UNTIL NOW, THEIR ATTACKS HAVE FAILED TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION ON OUR SHIELDS, BUT NOW...
THE SHIELDS HOLD. AND THEY WILL HOLD. BUT THEY ARE TAKING DAMAGE.
AND BELOW, AT THE HIDDEN BASE WRESTED BY THE EARTHBOUND AVENGERS FROM THE SELF-STYLED MASTER OF THE WORLD...
ALL RIGHT! KEEP IT UP, BOYS! CAP'S BOUGHT US SOME TIME -- LET'S TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT!
FORCE-FIELD SHIFTING STRUCTURAL FREQUENCIES. TRANSMITTING NEW DATA.
GOT IT, YELLOWJACKET. COMPENSATING...
GREAT, GREAT!
BETWEEN US AND THE PYRAMID, WE'VE GOT HIM UNDER ASSAULT FROM TWO SIDES! LET'S JUST HOPE --
"-- THE OTHERS CAN MAKE IT IN TIME --!"
THERE IT IS. WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING SOME DAMAGE.
AND WE'RE DOING IT WITH THE MASTER'S TECHNOLOGY, NOW THAT WE'VE FIGURED OUT HOW TO WORK IT. SOMETHING WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO DO...
...IF I HADN'T KILLED HIM. IF WE GET THROUGH THIS, I'LL HAVE TO FACE THAT...!

AH... THOR? I JUST WANTED TO SAY... I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I SAID EARLIER... FOR SAYING YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT HUMANS...
...THAT YOU WERE ONLY THINKING OF YOURSELF.
I WAS UPSET. I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID IT, AND I'M...
THOR?
...TH-THOR?
H-UHH!
THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS, KANG. YOUR MURDEROUS INVASION, YOUR DOMINATION OF EARTH...
...IT'S OVER, KANG. OVER!
IS IT, CAPTAIN? IS IT TRULY?
FIGHT, AVENGER -- FIGHT YOUR HARDEST! I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY! TRIUMPH IS SWEETEST -- SWEETEST BY FAR -- WHEN IT'S HARD-WON!
SO FIGHT! FIGHT ON, TO THE END! AND LOSE --
-- LOSE YOUR IDIOTIC PYRAMID -- YOUR ARCTIC BASE, YOUR LIVES --

-- ALL OF IT!
WE'RE CLOSE ENOUGH, TEAM --
SO LET'S GO, AVENGERS!
NNH!
LET'S LET 'EM KNOW WE'RE HERE!
SPREAD OUT YOUR ATTACKS, PEOPLE. HIT THE FORCE-FIELD EVERYWHERE -- MAYBE WE CAN OVERLOAD IT, BREACH IT --
HOW GOES YOUR TELEKINETIC SCAN, JUSTICE? CAN YOU FIND ANYTHING WITHIN THE FIELD -- A FIELD GENERATOR OR PROJECTOR -- THAT I CAN REACH OUT TO --
-- TRY TO TAKE CONTROL OF --
STILL LOOKING, VISION, STILL LOOKING...
KANG'S BASE CONTINUES TO BOMBARD THE PYRAMID, CAP -- AND WE'RE HURTING.
I'M RE-KNITTING THE HULL AS QUICKLY AS I CAN, BUT --
KEEP AT IT, TRIATHLON. AND KEEP UP OUR BARRAGE!
WE'VE GOT TO KEEP HIM ON DEFENSE --
-- AND BE READY TO MOVE, THE MINUTE THERE'S AN OPENING!

HEH.
SOMETHING FUNNY, TREMONT?
THINK ABOUT IT, GARRETT. YOU WERE MY DISCIPLE, MY FOREMOST FOLLOWER IN THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING...
...AND YET, YOU JUDGED ME A CRIMINAL, FOR GATHERING POWER TO SAVE THE EARTH FROM THIS VERY CRAFT.
FOR TAKING IT FROM THOSE WHO COULD NOT RESIST. WIELDING IT FOR MY OWN PURPOSES, AGAINST THEIR WILL.
AND YET WE WON. AND YOU WIELD THAT POWER NOW... THAT POWER AND MORE. AND CONSIDERING WHAT YOU USE IT FOR NOW...
...AND WHAT WE BOTH KNOW OF ITS NATURE... WHAT WE BOTH KNOW TO BE TRUE...
...CONSIDERING ALL THAT, AM I TRULY SO EVIL?
HO, AVENGERS! THY FELLOWS HAVE ARRIVED!
WELL, ALL RIGHT!
PICK A SECTION OF FORCE-FIELD, AND HAVE AT IT!
GHGH!
NO, QUASAR-- WE WON'T HAVE ANY EFFECT THAT WAY!
IT'S AN ADAPTIVE FIELD-- IT SHIFTS ITS ENERGY STRUCTURE IN RESPONSE TO ATTACKS ON IT! WE'VE ALL GOT TO HIT IT IN THE SAME PLACE--
--GIVE IT TOO MANY VARIABLES TO DEAL WITH, TOO MUCH TO ADAPT TO!
EVEN OUR POWER MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH, THOUGH--

-- SO THE WASP'S ARRANGED A LITTLE MORE HELP FOR US --
THE PRESENCE AND STARLIGHT ARE HERE, AMERICAN.
LET US WASTE NO MORE TIME.
ALL RIGHT. FIRST SALVO...
"...NOW!"
ONCE THE SHATTERING ASSAULT FADES...
YES!
ACCORDING TO MY READINGS, IT'S WEAKENED! JUST SLIGHTLY... BUT WE HURT IT! POUR IT ON FOLKS!
<AYE, STARLIGHT. WE SHALL BREAK THIS INTRUDER, BUT THEN WE WILL HAVE PROVED OUR POWER. WE CAN RETURN TO THE BROKEN EARTH BELOW...>
<...AND CLAIM OUR DUE. OUR OWN NATION, PERHAPS, OR DOMINION OVER MOTHER RUSSIAN...>
<BE SILENT, SERGEI.>
<YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED, TO SAVE OUR PLANET. AND YOU WILL DO NO MORE THAN THAT. AND THEN YOU WILL RETURN TO CAPTIVITY.>
<YOU WILL DO THIS WILLINGLY...>
<...OR BY HEAVEN, I WILL LEAVE YOU!>
...
<VERY WELL, MY LOVE. FOR YOU.>
HAH!
YOU SEE, CAPTAIN? YOU SEE? YOU MAY BE THE FINEST WARRIOR OF THE AGE --
-- BUT KANG IS A WARRIOR FOR ALL THE AGES!
BIG -- BIG TALK, MISTER --
-- BUT IT'S NOT -- OVER YET! IT'S NOT --

WH--
GHAH!
WHAT IN--?
FATHER!
BLAST-- OUR SHIELDS MAY BE HOLDING, BUT THE POUNDING THEY'RE TAKING IS WEAKENING THEM, SHAKING ALL OF DAMOCLES BASE.
IT MUST HAVE DAMAGED THE HOLO-PROJECTION UNITS--
--HURLING ME OUT OF THE BATTLE WHEN I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TRIUMPH!
FATHER...
SIRE, THE BARRAGE FROM TWO FRONTS CONTINUES, AND THE ASSAULT OF SO MANY AVENGERS HAS PUT US FULLY ON THE DEFENSIVE.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD DISENGAGE, RETURN TO OUR HOME CENTURY. WE COULD REARM, RECUPERATE, AND RETURN ONLY SECONDS FROM WHEN WE LEFT...
...STRIKING AT FULL FORCE WHEN THEY ARE STILL REELING FROM BATTLE.
NO.
WE WILL FIGHT THE BATTLE BEFORE US, RATHER THAN RESORT TO CHRONAL GUILE. TIME IS OUR CANVAS, MARCUS, NOT OUR WEAPON.
I MADE MY PREPARATIONS WELL...
...ANTICIPATED THE ALIEN PYRAMID, THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE, ALL THE ARMIES THEY HAVE AMASSED...

THE ONE THING I STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, IS THEIR USE OF THE SO-CALLED MASTER'S TECHNOLOGY.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE-- HE WOULD NOT HAVE GIVEN IT UP WILLINGLY, AND THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WREST IT FROM HIM.
IF I KNEW HOW THEY MANAGED THAT--!
I'M... I'M SURE IT WILL PROVE IRRELEVANT, SIRE.
YOU WILL TRIUMPH OVER THEM ANYWAY...
FEAUGH!
ENOUGH OF THIS! WE ARE HARD-PRESSED, TRUE-- BUT THAT IS WHEN THE TRUE MEASURE OF A MAN IS TAKEN! AS LONG AS I HAVE WHAT MATTERS--
--MY STRENGTH, MY SKILL, THE BATTLE BEFORE ME--
--AS LONG AS I HAVE THOSE, AND... AND MY SON BESIDE ME... THEN ALL WILL BE AS IT SHOULD BE.
COME, MARCUS...
"...LET US SHOW THESE FOOLS HOW TO WAGE WAR!"

KROOM
KANG IS CONCENTRATING MOST OF HIS FIRE ON US, CAP.
APPARENTLY, HE WANTS TO BLOW US TO BITS, THEN TURN TO THE OTHERS.
I'M DOING AS MUCH REPAIR WORK AS I CAN, BUT --
BLAST IT -- WE CAN'T JUST FLOAT HERE LIKE A PUNCHING BAG!
WE'VE GOT TO GET CLOSER -- GET INTO THE FIGHT AGAIN!
UH, CAP? WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM...
ARE YOU MAD, GARRETT? YOU CAN'T SERIOUSLY BE THINKING OF --
I HADN'T BEEN THINKING... BUT TREMONT MADE ME SEE IT.
THE POWER WE'RE USING, ALL THE POWER IN THIS PYRAMID -- IT'S ALL STOLEN, AND IT'S ALL ALIVE.
IT'S THE SPIRITS OF ALL THOSE THE TRIPLE-EVIL CRUSHED --
-- ALL THE RACES IT DESTROYED, LEECHING THEIR POWER INTO THE PYRAMID.
NOW WE -- I -- WIELD THAT POWER. BUT I USED IT TO DESTROY OUR COMMON ENEMY. AND THAT WAS THE TRIPLE-EVIL. NOT KANG.
THE MORE WE USE IT NOW, THE MORE WE SACRIFICE THE SPIRITS OF ANCIENT RACES, IN A BATTLE THAT WAS NEVER THEIRS.
THEY ACHE FOR RELEASE, CAP. FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM AFTER THEIR LONG ORDEAL.
CAN WE REALLY USE THEIR SOULS AS A WEAPON? AGAINST THEIR WILL?
I -- I DON'T --
WE NEED THAT POWER -- WE DESPERATELY NEED IT -- BUT TO ENSLAVE OTHERS TO FIGHT FOR US --
STOP!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS, YOU FOOLS! YOU CAN'T! EARTH LIES IN THE BALANCE! YOU CANNOT SCRUPLE AT ANYTHING -- ANYTHING! -- TO SAVE IT!

DAMN YOU!
I HAD A SHRED OF POWER LEFT -- WAS SURREPTITIOUSLY ABSORBING MORE -- I WAS GOING TO USE IT TO ESCAPE!
BUT YOU --
THEY'RE ALIENS, DAMN YOU! ALIENS! WHO CARES ABOUT THEIR SOULS?!
TREMONT--!
NO!
YOU SEE THIS, YOU SANCTIMONIOUS FOOLS? THIS IS WHAT MUST BE DONE! THIS IS --
NNH...
NNUH...
RIBS... LUNGS BURNING...
WHAT... WHAT MUST... BE DONE...
AHHGKHH!

HE -- HE --
THAT DID IT! THAT WAS THE LAST STRAW -- THE FORCE-FIELD IS DOWN!
IT'S DOWN!
QUICK, EVERYONE! MOVE!
THE FRONT DOOR'S FINALLY OPEN --
-- BUT WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO YET!
C'MON, THOR -- LET'S GET INSIDE!
AYE, WONDER MAN!
AYE!
IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES...
...I'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED...
BELOW...
CHOOM
NOW! NOW! BOMBARDMENT ON AUTOMATIC! SCAN THE INTERIOR, NOW THAT WE CAN!
GET DATA TO FEED TO THE OTHERS...

"...THEY'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP THEY CAN GET!"

WAY TO GO, JACK OF HEARTS! WE'VE GOT 'EM ON THE RUN!
THE ONES IN THIS BAY, MAYBE.
BUT THIS BASE IS CRAWLING WITH SOLDIERS, FIRESTAR...
"...AND YOU KNOW THERE ARE REINFORCEMENTS ON THE WAY!"
HK
SHRAMM
GHUHH!
BTAM
NOW, TROOPERS! BEFORE THEY CAN RISE! SET FOR MAXIMUM ENERGY CONCENTRATION --
-- AND WE WILL --
LIKE HELL YOU WILL, JERKS!

TH-THANKS, JUSTICE...
NO SWEAT, IRON MAN. I'LL GET PHOTON AND WONDER MAN TO SHELTER, AND BE BACK AS SOON AS...
VANCE...
...THEY COULDN'T BE IN BETTER HANDS.
JOIN US WHEN YOU CAN.
OUTSIDE, DAMOCLES BASE HAS SHIFTED TO SECONDARY DEFENSES, USING ITS GUNS TO INTERCEPT BLASTS FROM THE BATTERIES ON EARTH...
...AND ANY REMAINING WEAPONRY TO FIRE BACK...
MADAME WASP! AVENGERS! THIS INSTALLATION'S FALLING APART! WE'VE GOT TO EVACUATE!
THERE, HANK! THAT'S IT!
GOT IT, HON!
ISOLATING...
WASP TO AVENGERS -- ANYONE WHO CAN HEAR ME!
WE'VE FOUND THE BASE'S POWER CORE! WE'VE FOUND IT! WE CAN GUIDE YOU...

WARBIRD HERE, WASP. I'M OPEN -- I'LL TAKE IT.
OKAY. WE'RE ON YOUR LOCATOR SIGNAL.
WE'RE SHOWING YOU IN A TRANSVERSE CORRIDOR. IN ABOUT 75 YARDS, THERE'S A RIGHT-BRANCHING OFFSHOOT. ONCE YOU'RE IN THAT...
AND, SOON...
...HARD LEFT! BUT THERE ARE THREE LIFE FORMS...!
GOT 'EM!
DOIN' GREAT, GIRL. THERE SHOULD BE A HATCH ON THE REARWARD WALL...
SHAMM
CORRECTION, WASP.
THERE WAS A HATCH.
HALT WHERE YOU ARE, INTRUDER.
I AM MARCUS, SCARLET CENTURION AND HEIR TO THE IMPERIUM, AND YOU WILL NOT --
THEN HE SEES WHO HE FACES --
-- AND STOPS DEAD.
SO DOES SHE.
IT WAS NOT LONG AGO THAT THEY FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE -- THAT EACH RISKED THEIR LIFE TO SAVE THE OTHER'S. THEY PARTED AS FOES, TRUE --
-- BUT STILL --
BACK AWAY, WARBIRD. I AIDED YOU ONCE, AND WOULD RATHER NOT FIGHT YOU --
-- BUT I AM MY FATHER'S SON, AND IF I MUST --

WHRAMMM
NOT A CHANCE, RED!
UHH!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, WARBIRD? DO IT!
DO IT!
I --
NO!
YES.
AT HER PEAK, SHE COMMANDED THE ENERGIES OF A STAR.
THAT LINK -- THAT FIRE -- IS LONG GONE. BUT THE CAPACITY REMAINS.
WARBIRD PLUNGES DEEP, DEEP INTO THE HEART OF DAMOCLES BASE'S POWER CORE, AND SHE FEELS IT SEETHING AROUND HER, RAW AND ANGRY.
AND SHE CONCENTRATES -- DRAWING IT TO HER, DRAWING IT IN. ABSORBING IT.

AND IT ROARS IN HER EARS, DEAFENING HER, ALIVE IN HER BRAIN, HER HEART, BEHIND HER EYES --
AND LORD HELP HER, IT FEELS GOOD. LIKE IT USED TO. LIKE SHE NEVER WANTS TO LET IT GO.
AND SHE CALLS IT TO HER AGAIN -- CALLING IT, BURNING IN ITS FIRE, CALLING MORE AND MORE.
AND THEN --
THEN SHE SIGHS. AND WITH A SAD SMILE --
-- SHE RELEASES IT.
IT SLAMS OUTWARD, BREACHING THE CONTAINMENT FIELD THAT HELD IT STILL FOR SO LONG.
IT RIPS THROUGH THE DECKS AND BULKHEADS AROUND THE POWER ROOMS, SHREDDING THEM BEFORE IT LIKE TISSUE PAPER.
AAAAAH!
WH-WHAT--?
IT ROARS UP AND DOWN THE LENGTH OF DAMOCLES BASE --
WE MUST GO, AVENGERS.
WE MUST ABANDON THIS STRUCTURE, LEST WE TOO ARE CONSUMED BY ITS DEATH THROES.
NO, REALLY?
-- TOUCHING SECONDARY AND TERTIARY POWER DISTRIBUTION POINTS, AND RUPTURING THEM AS WELL.
IT SEEKS ESCAPE.
IT SEEKS FREEDOM.

AND IN MOMENTS, DAMOCLES BASE IS CHAOS--
GO, AVENGERS!
GO! GO!
--WITHIN AND WITHOUT.
AAAAH!
NO!
NO, PLEASE--!
THROUGH ITS BUCKLING, COLLAPSING CORRIDORS, HOWEVER--
--STRIDES ONE FIGURE-- CALM, APPARENTLY UNCONCERNED--
--BUT SEEKING, SEARCHING--
WHERE IS HE?
CAN'T ABANDON HIM. HE'S GOT TO GO, GOT TO TAKE HIS PLACE AS--
FATHER! THERE YOU ARE!

WE CAN'T REMAIN ANY LONGER, FATHER! YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THAT NOW!
WE'VE GET TO LAUNCH THE COMMAND POD-- GET TO SAFETY!
WE'LL ESCAPE-- BACK TO THE IMPERIUM. WE'LL COME BACK ANOTHER TIME...
NO. YOU'LL GO. I STAY HERE.
WH-WHAT--?
YOU ARE MY HEIR, MARCUS. YOU HAVE A LIFETIME TO LIVE, TO LEARN FROM YOUR ERRORS. TO BECOME A MAN, A RULER, AS I DID.
BUT THIS IS MY LAST BATTLE, AND I AM CONTENT. I WILL GO OUT AS I CHOOSE.
BUT--
NO, MARCUS.
I AM NOT MERELY YOUR FATHER. I AM ALSO YOUR COMMANDER--
--AND I AM ORDERING YOU TO ESCAPE.
YOU HAVE AN EMPIRE TO RULE. A THRONE TO GROW INTO.
AS FOR ME, AS LONG AS I HAVE MY STRENGTH, MY SKILL AND THE BATTLE BEFORE ME-- AND THE LOYALTY OF MY SON AND HEIR--
--I HAVE ALL A MAN TRULY NEEDS.
BIP BOOP BEEP
FAREWELL, MARCUS--

"-- BRING CREDIT TO YOUR FATHER'S NAME."
AND WITHIN --
SO BE IT.
IF THIS IS THE END, I WELCOME IT -- I DO NOT SHRINK FROM IT, BUT I DO NOT SURRENDER TO IT, EITHER!
ONCE THE COMMAND POD IS FAR ENOUGH FROM ITS HOUSING, IT FLARES WITH CHRONAL ENERGIES --
-- AND IS GONE.
FATES, AVENGERS -- BRING YOUR WORST --
-- KANG THE CONQUEROR FIGHTS TO THE END!
AND WITH A FINAL, CONVULSIVE LURCH, DAMOCLES BASE BEGINS TO FALL.
FIRST SLOWLY, VERY SLOWLY --
-- THEN FASTER --
-- FASTER --

I AM KANG.
KANG THE CONQUEROR.
A THOUSAND THOUSAND WORLDS HAVE I STRODE, CRUSHING ALL RESISTANCE BENEATH MY BOOTED SOLES. I HAVE CONQUERED WORLDS. CENTURIES.
I AM KANG. AND I AM A LEGEND.
TARGET HELD TOGETHER FOR MUCH OF RE-ENTRY, BUT BEGAN TO BREAK UP AS ITS HEAT-SHIELDS FAILED.
WONDER MAN, IRON MAN AND THE OTHERS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY INTERCEPTED MANY OF THE FRAGMENTS, DIVERTING THEM OUT OVER THE OCEAN.
TARGET TRIGGERED ANTI-GRAV TECHNOLOGY, WHICH ALSO FAILED, BUT SERVED TO CHECK ITS SPEED SOMEWHAT.
AS A RESULT, THE FINAL IMPACT DID LESS DAMAGE THAN MIGHT HAVE OTHER-WISE BEEN EXPECTED--
--AND THERE WAS SUFFICIENT WARNING FOR MOST OF THE AREA RESIDENTS TO EVACUATE.
MOST. BUT NOT ALL OF THEM. NOT ALL.
THERE WERE MORE DEATHS. MORE BLOOD ON OUR CONSCIENCES--

-- AND ON HIS.
GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND.
I AM KANG, THE CONQUEROR --
-- AND TODAY MY LEGEND ENDS.
AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN:
A GOOD DAY TO DIE
SHOE FLY
Tony's BARBER
PETLAN
PET SUP
LAW OFFICE

POOOnt
I YET LIVE--
--BUT I HAVE SUFFERED REVERSES. MY COMMAND BASE IS DESTROYED, KNOCKED FROM THE HEAVENS BY THE AVENGERS.
MY MEN ABOARD IT ARE DEAD.
EVEN MY PERSONAL FORCE-FIELD, AND THE OTHER WEAPONS WITHIN MY RAIMENT ARE NOW FAILING, AFTER PROTECTING ME FROM THE IMPACT.
I AM ALONE.
AND SURROUNDED BY MY ENEMIES.
IT WILL BE A GLORIOUS END.
GLORIOUS.
WELL?
COME, THEN! COME AND TAKE ME IF YOU CAN! KANG SURRENDERS TO NO MAN--
AND IF HE FALLS, THEN KANG FALLS FIGHTING!
ALL RIGHT.

WE'RE WITH YOU, CAP.
LET'S GET THAT BLUE-FACED--
HOLD.
LOOK THOU FOR SURVIVORS, VISION AND FIREBIRD. QUELL THE FIRES THAT RAGE IN THIS HAMLET, WARBIRD AND JACK OF HEARTS. BUT THIS--
--THIS DOTH BE CAPTAIN AMERICA'S BATTLE.
WHAT?
WHAT'S THE IDEA, THOR? SOME SCREWED-UP POINT OF ASGARDIAN HONOR? THIS GUY'S A MONSTER--
--HE SHOULD BE BROUGHT DOWN HARD, NOT TREATED WITH KID GLOVES! YOU THINK HE DESERVES A FAIR FIGHT?!
THOU DOST MISUNDERSTAND, WARBIRD.
IT BE CAPTAIN AMERICA'S BATTLE NOT DUE TO RESPECT FOR THE FOE--
"--BUT BECAUSE CAPTAIN AMERICA WILL BE ALL THAT IS NEEDED."
YAAHAHHRRHHH

YOU WON'T WIN THIS, KANG. SURRENDER. MAKE IT EASIER ON YOURSELF.
I...DON'T THINK SO, CAPTAIN.
I HAVE DONE ALL I SET OUT TO DO. I HAVE CARVED A SWATH THROUGH THE GALAXIES AS THE GREATEST CONQUEROR EVER--
--RULED LIKE A GOD, HUMBLED MY ENEMIES, SEEN EVEN THE AVENGERS SURRENDER TO MY MIGHT, RAISED A... WORTHY SON AND HEIR.
A MAN LIKE ME SHOULD NOT DIE IN BED, BUT IN BATTLE AGAINST MY GREATEST FOES. AND THAT HONOR--
--THAT HONOR FALLS TO YOU.
HONOR?!
YOU'VE KILLED MILLIONS, DEVASTATED A WORLD-- AND YOU SAY IT'S AN HONOR TO DEFEAT YOU?!
SHRAAAAK

PLAMMMM
IF THERE WAS HONOR TO BE HAD IN THIS-- ANY HONOR AT ALL--
--IT'D BE IN MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE-- BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE--
--SO THAT THERE WILL NEVER AGAIN BE MEN LIKE YOU! NEVER!
W-WELL STRUCK, CAPTAIN.
YOU ARE TRULY... TRULY WORTHY OF...
...WORTHY OF THIS GREAT...

DO THEY RETURN, THEN? IN TIME, THEY MUST.
THEY RETURN--
--IF ONLY TO LAUD THEIR MIGHTIEST WARRIOR FOR HIS VICTORY--
--AND TO CAGE THE FALLEN WOLF.
NICE WORK, CAP.
THE WORST OF THE FIRES ARE OUT, AND WE HAVE RESCUED WHAT SURVIVORS WE COULD FIND. MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IS ON THE WAY.
SO, IS THAT IT?
WE WON, RIGHT?
LOOK AROUND YOU, JACK.
NOBODY WON HERE. NOBODY.
AND IN TIME--
--THEY TURN TO THE BUSINESS OF THE DAY--
VISION, SEND A SIGNAL-- BRING A QUINJET TO US. TRIATHLON-- SECURE KANG FOR TRANSPORT...
WH--?
WHERE'S THOR?

I SAW HIM-- JUST A MOMENT AGO. HAS-- HAS HE LEFT US? DID I--?
HEY, FIREBIRD-- DON'T LOOK SO DOWN AT HEART.
THERE'S A LOT LEFT TO DO-- BUT AT THIS POINT, IT'S CLEAN-UP.
KANG'S DEFEATED. HIS ARMIES ARE BROKEN. IT'S BEEN A LONG WAR, BUT IT'S OVER. WE CAN BE GLAD OF THAT, AT LEAST.
I... HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, WONDER MAN...
THE QUINJET WILL BE HERE SOON, CAPTAIN. AND I HAVE SENT REPORTS OF OUR VICTORY.
THE PRESIDENT IS RETURNING TO U.S. SOIL--
--AND EMERGENCY MEASURES ARE BEING INSTITUTED. WE WILL BE TOLD SOON TO WHOM KANG SHOULD BE DELIVERED.
UH, CAP...?
TRIATHLON?
I WON'T BE RETURNING TO NEW YORK WITH YOU, NOT RIGHT NOW.
I'VE GOT TO HEAD BACK TO THE PYRAMID, DISSOLVE IT-- RELEASE ANY REMAINING ENERGIES WITHIN IT, KEEP IT FROM BEING ANY FURTHER THREAT.
AFTER THAT-- I'VE GOT SOME THINGS TO FIGURE OUT. WHAT TO DO ABOUT WHAT I'VE BECOME-- AND ABOUT THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING.
BUT I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I CAN.
I UNDERSTAND, AVENGER. GODSPEED...
...AND GOOD LUCK.
WE'LL SEE YOU WHEN WE SEE YOU.

AND WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, THEY WILL RETURN HOME IN TRIUMPH--
THERE'S STILL A GREAT DEAL LEFT TO DO--
--KANG'S ARMIES, FOR INSTANCE, ARE STILL SCATTERED ACROSS EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, MOST ARE SURRENDERING--
BUT WE'LL HAVE TO ROOT OUT THE OTHERS. THAT'LL BE A PLEASURE.
AND WE'LL HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO REPATRIATE THEM TO THEIR PROPER TIME PERIOD-- MAYBE REED RICHARDS CAN HELP WITH THAT...
YES. AND WE CAN AID IN REBUILDING, IN DEALING WITH THE WORLD'S FEAR AND PANIC--
--WE'RE A RESILIENT LOT, BUT IT'LL BE MONTHS, MAYBE YEARS, BEFORE ALL THIS IS BEHIND US.
I CONCUR. AND --
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE, CAP. SOMETHING ELSE WE NEED TO ADDRESS-- MAYBE NOT RIGHT AWAY, BUT SOON.
YES?
I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S TIME TO HAVE FILLED YOU IN YET...
...BUT I KILLED THE MASTER. GUTTED HIM WITH A SHARD OF METAL.
MAYBE BLOWING UP KANG'S POWER-CORE, CRIPPLING HIS BASE LIKE THAT-- MAYBE IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, EVEN THOUGH HIS MEN DIED--
--BUT I'M NOT SO SURE THAT'S THE CASE WITH THE MASTER. IF I HADN'T KILLED HIM, MAYBE WASHINGTON DC WOULD STILL BE WHOLE.

AND MAYBE THINGS'D HAVE BEEN WORSE, CAROL. IF YOU HADN'T KILLED HIM, WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD HIS TECHNOLOGY, AND --
I KNOW, IRON MAN. BUT --
ALL RIGHT, WARBIRD. WE'LL GET INTO THIS AT OUR EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.
CAROL -- YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED, AND IF YOU DON'T INSIST ON --
NO, VISION. WE'RE NOT SWEEPING THIS UNDER THE RUG.
I HAVE TO DO THIS.
I HAVE TO.
HEY, GUYS --
-- NOT TO INTERRUPT OR ANYTHING -- BUT YOU REALLY OUGHT TO SEE THIS...
WHAT?
OH.
OH.
AND ARE THEY HAILED AS HEROES?
I THINK SO. I THINK SO.
WHY WOULD THEY NOT BE? THEY SAVED THE WORLD, AFTER ALL. SAVED THE WORLD FROM A TYRANT. A MADMAN. A MONSTER.
THEY WILL SURELY BE CELEBRATED -- NOT JUST AT THEIR NEW YORK HOME --
THANK YOU AVENGERS
THANK YOU!
NYU

-- BUT ALL AROUND THE WORLD.
LOS ANGELES.
FREE!
WE'RE FREE!
THANK YOU, SCARLET WITCH -- THANK YOU FOR STAYING WITH US...
I'M JUST GLAD IT'S OVER...
PARIS.
LIBERTÉ! LIBERTÉ!
VENGEURS! VENGEURS!
MOSCOW.
NORTHERN CANADA. THE FORMER BASE OF THE MASTER.
POP

HERE'S TO YOU ALL, GUYS! DANE, WALT, HANK, ALL OF YOU!
YOU DID A GREAT JOB -- AND IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN DONE WITHOUT YOU!
HEAR HEAR!
AND I'VE ONLY GOT ONE THING TO ADD TO THAT, JAN...
BEEP eep BEEP eep
HUH?
HANK...?
WHAT'S THAT?
I... DON'T KNOW. WE BARELY HAD THE TIME TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO OPERATE THE WEAPONS SYSTEMS, BUT THIS...
AS NEAR AS I CAN TELL, IT'S ASKING FOR AN OVERRIDE CODE.
AN OVERRIDE CODE?
TO OVERRIDE WHAT...?

MONTANA.
AND AS FOR ME --
I AWAKEN IN A PRISON. AN EMPTY PRISON, DEEP WITHIN A MOUNTAIN, HOLDING NO ONE BUT ME.
THEY TREAT ME WITH RESPECT, OR AT LEAST FEAR. AND I AM CONTENT.
I HAVE EVERYTHING.
I BUILT AN EMPIRE. WON GREAT VICTORIES. EVEN DEFEATED THE AVENGERS, AND ACCEPTED THEIR SURRENDER.
I HAVE A SON AND HEIR WHOSE NAME WILL RING ACROSS THE COSMOS.
THEY WILL KILL ME.
I WILL BE TRIED AND EXECUTED BY THE ONLY FOES EVER TO DEFEAT ME DECISIVELY. I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO DIE IN BATTLE --
-- BUT IT IS NONETHELESS A GOOD ENDING. A FITTING ENDING. I WILL GO TO THE GALLOWS AS BEFITS A KING.
AND MY LEGEND WILL NEVER BE EQUALLED. MY NAME WILL BE IMMORTAL, MY ACHIEVEMENTS SPOKEN OF 'TIL THE END OF TIME.
MY ONLY REGRET...
NO, MARCUS WILL DO WELL. HE IS THE BEST OF THEM, AND HE WILL LEARN. TO DO THAT, HE MUST MAKE MISTAKES.
HE'LL BECOME A FIT SUCCESSOR, GIVEN A BIT MORE TIME, A BIT MORE TEMPERING. AND HE WILL CARVE A LEGEND, TOO.
MY TIME IS OVER. HIS HAS BEGUN. IT WILL BE --
-- IT WILL BE GOOD TO REST.

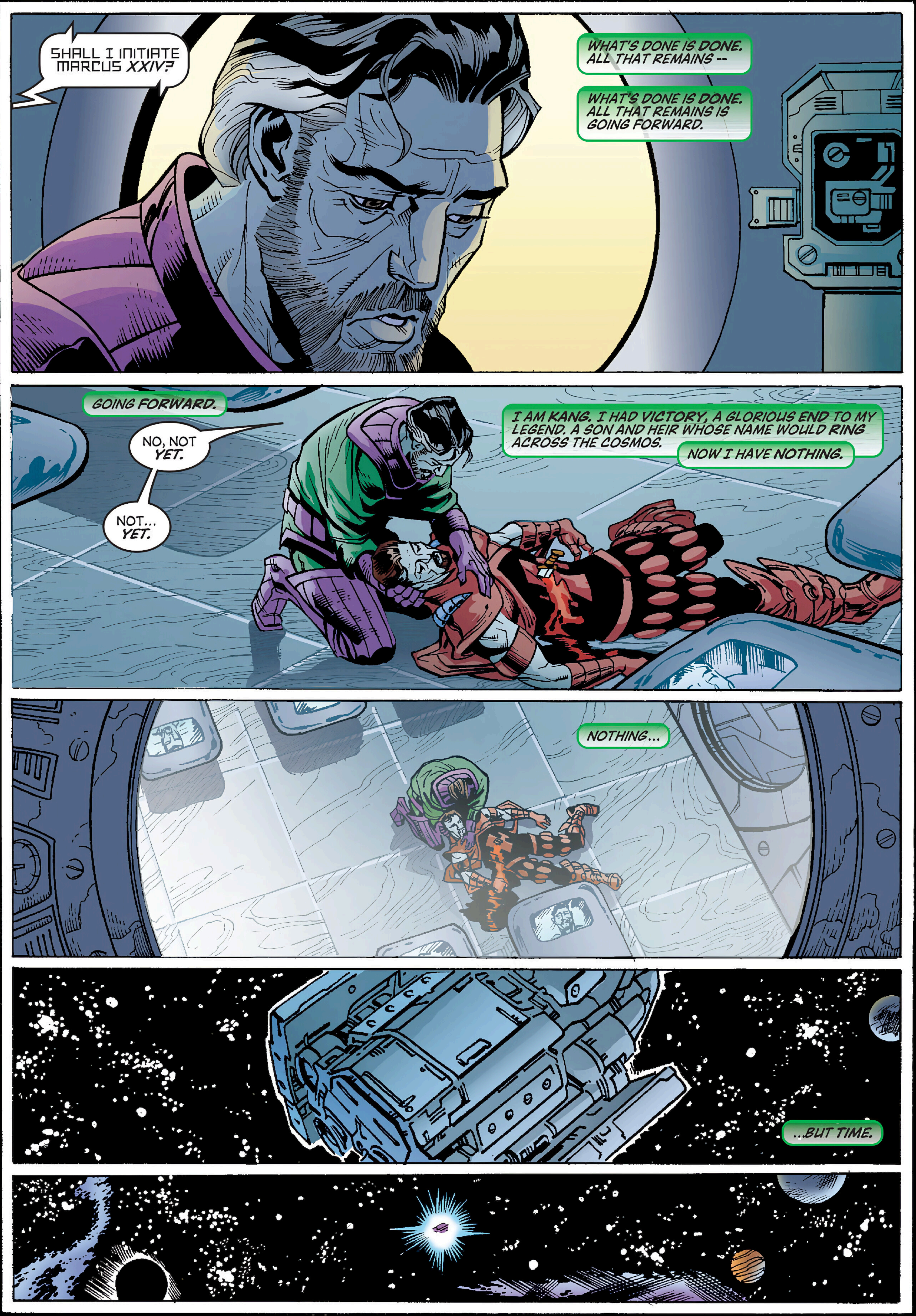
GREETINGS, FATHER.
SHALL WE GO?
WH-WHAT -- ?
WE'VE PROJECTED A NULL-TIME FIELD AROUND THIS MOUNTAIN, AND ARE EXTRACTING YOU BETWEEN HEARTBEATS.
WE USED A PROTONIC ARC TO CARVE OUR WAY IN TO YOUR CELL.
I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT ALERTING YOU, BUT YOU WERE IN THE NULL-FIELD AS WELL, UNTIL I ARRIVED AND EXTENDED THE EXCEPTION ZONE AROUND YOU.
A PROTONIC ARC...?
AND I JUST SAT HERE, AS FROZEN AS THOSE FOOLS OUT THERE, SET TO GUARD ME.
WHILE HE SIMPLY -- SIMPLY --
YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE COME, MARCUS!
I WAS CONTENT TO STAY HERE -- TO ALLOW EVENTS TO PLAY OUT -- !
BUT SIRE -- A WISE MAN ONCE TAUGHT ME THAT WHEN CONDITIONS ARE INEVITABLE, THEY MUST BE ENDURED --
-- BUT THAT ONLY A FOOL DELIVERS HIMSELF WILLINGLY INTO THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES.
THE DOOR IS OPEN, FATHER. DO WE GO, OR...?

ONLY A FOOL, HMM?
THERE, FATHER. DOES THAT NOT FEEL BETTER?
I HAVE TWO MILLION MEN WAITING UP THE TIMESTREAM, READY TO STRIKE. WE WILL DESTROY THESE UPSTARTS AND LAY WASTE TO THEIR PLANET AS A LESSON --
-- AND RESUME OUR CONQUESTS ELSEWHERE. RIGEL-14, PERHAPS, OR THE ANOPIUS SYSTEM...
YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE RESCUED ME, MARCUS.
WHAT? BUT SIRE --
I WOULD HAVE DIED. AND MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETE, MY LEGEND ETERNAL.
YOU COULD HAVE BECOME... WHATEVER YOU ARE TO BECOME. YOU ARE NOT ME, AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I VALUE --
-- BUT YOU ARE THE BEST OF THEM. YOU'D MAKE YOUR OWN LEGEND.
I COULD NEVER LEAVE YOU TO ROT, FATHER -- TO BE SLAIN BY THESE... INFERIORS... I AM A DUTIFUL SON. WHO LOVES HIS FATHER --
-- AND I WANT TO BATTLE AT YOUR SIDE FOR YEARS TO COME.
AND I DON'T KNOW -- DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EVEN DO IT. BUT I FORCE MYSELF TO SMILE --
COME WITH ME, SON.

YOUR PRIVATE CHAMBERS? YOU -- YOU HAVE NEVER ALLOWED ME TO ENTER HERE BEFORE.
NO. AND TODAY...
...YOU WILL DISCOVER WHY.
THIS -- IT'S A CRYPT! A MAUSOLEUM!
YES.
AND THESE COFFINS -- THESE CORPSES --
-- THEY'RE ME! ALL OF THEM!
YES.
CONQUERING THIS EARTH WAS NEVER THE TRUE AIM, MY SON. IT WAS MY GIFT TO YOU. TO MY HEIR.
THE FINALE TO MY LEGEND, THE DAWN OF YOURS, AS WE TRIUMPHED OVER MY GREATEST FOES.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GLORIOUS, BECAUSE YOU -- YOU WERE THE BEST OF THEM.
THE BEST OF...?
YOU WERE NOT THE FIRST, MARCUS. NOR EVEN THE TENTH. BUT BEFORE YOU, EACH OF THE SONS I BRED PROVED... UNSUITABLE.
UNABLE TO MASTER THE SKILLS THEY NEEDED. COWARDLY. SICKLY. THERE WAS ALWAYS A FAULT. AND THEN THERE WAS YOU --
-- AND I THOUGHT --

BUT YOU BETRAYED ME.
YOU BECAME INFATUATED WITH THE AVENGER WARBIRD, AND SOUGHT TO HELP HER, TO PROVE YOURSELF TO HER. YOU SAVED HER LIFE --
-- HELPED HER INFILTRATE THE SO-CALLED MASTER'S BASE UNSEEN. AND YOU THOUGHT IT WAS NOTHING. IT WAS THE KEY, HOWEVER --
-- THE ONE PIECE THAT GAVE THE AVENGERS THEIR ULTIMATE VICTORY.
AND STILL, I WOULD HAVE FORGIVEN YOU --
-- IF YOU HAD COME TO ME. ADMITTED TO YOUR ACTIONS. I GAVE YOU CHANCES.
BUT YOU LIED.
F-FATHER -- I DIDN'T MEAN TO --
-- IT WAS AN ERROR, THAT'S ALL -- !
MARCUS, MARCUS.
WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. ALL THAT REMAINS IS GOING FORWARD.
I WAS CONTENT TO DIE. TO LET YOU GO ON, BECOME YOUR OWN MAN, YOUR OWN RULER, YOUR OWN LEGEND.
IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED, THEN. MANY A GREAT MAN BEGAN BY BETRAYING HIS FATHER.
BUT NOW -- NOW I AM HERE --

-- AND KANG THE CONQUEROR CANNOT TOLERATE A TRAITOR IN HIS CAMP.
NOT IF HE IS TO GO ON.
F --
F --
HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME BACK FOR ME.
I WOULD HAVE DIED, AND GLADLY, TO AVOID THIS. BUT I DIDN'T.
AND KANG THE CONQUEROR CANNOT TOLERATE A TRAITOR IN HIS CAMP.
CANNOT.
I -- I CANNOT.
YOU WERE THE BEST OF THEM, MY SON...
LIFE-FUNCTIONS OF MARCUS XXIII HAVE TERMINATED.



KURT BUSIEK WRITER KIERON DWYER AND RICK REMENDER A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH
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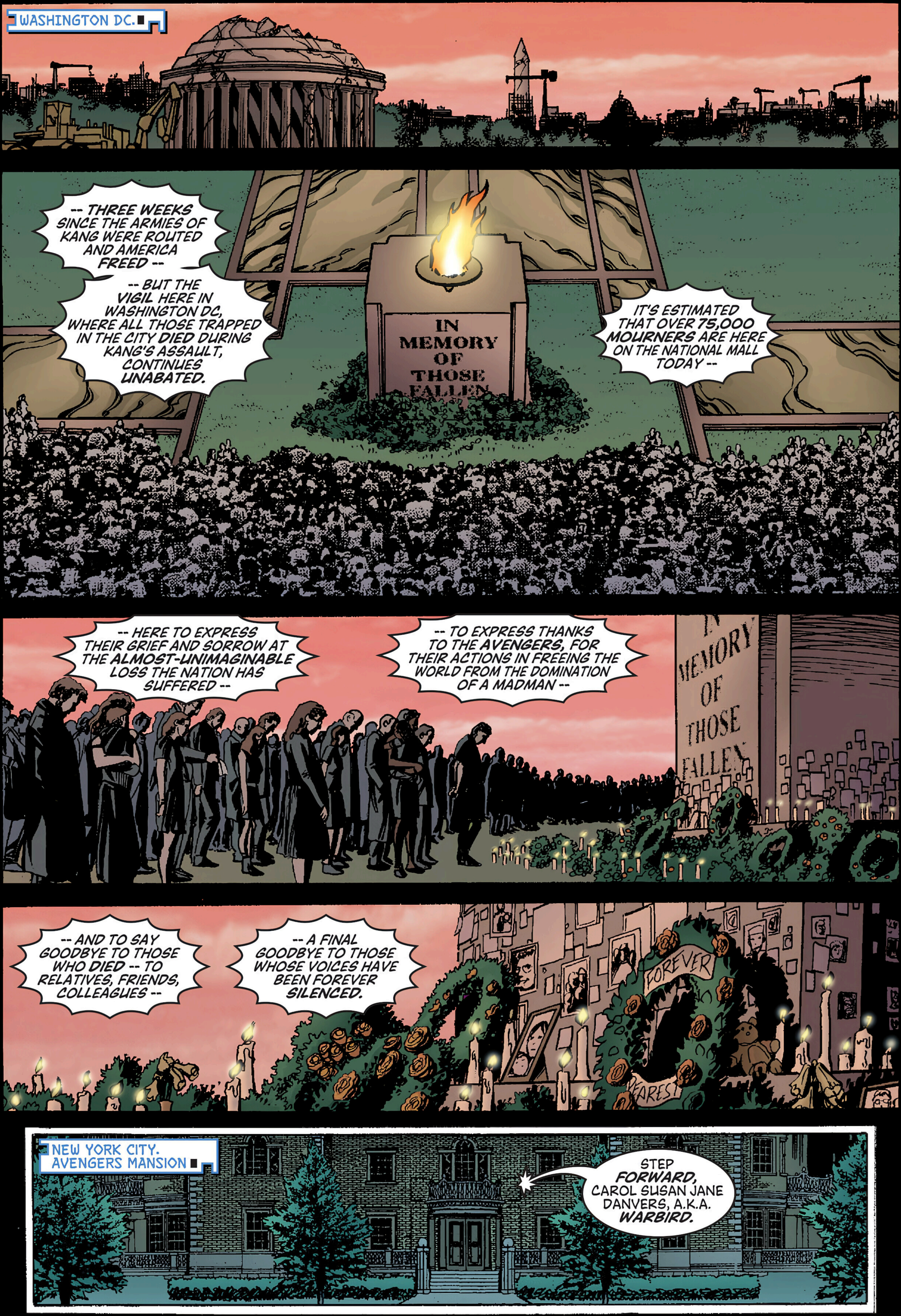
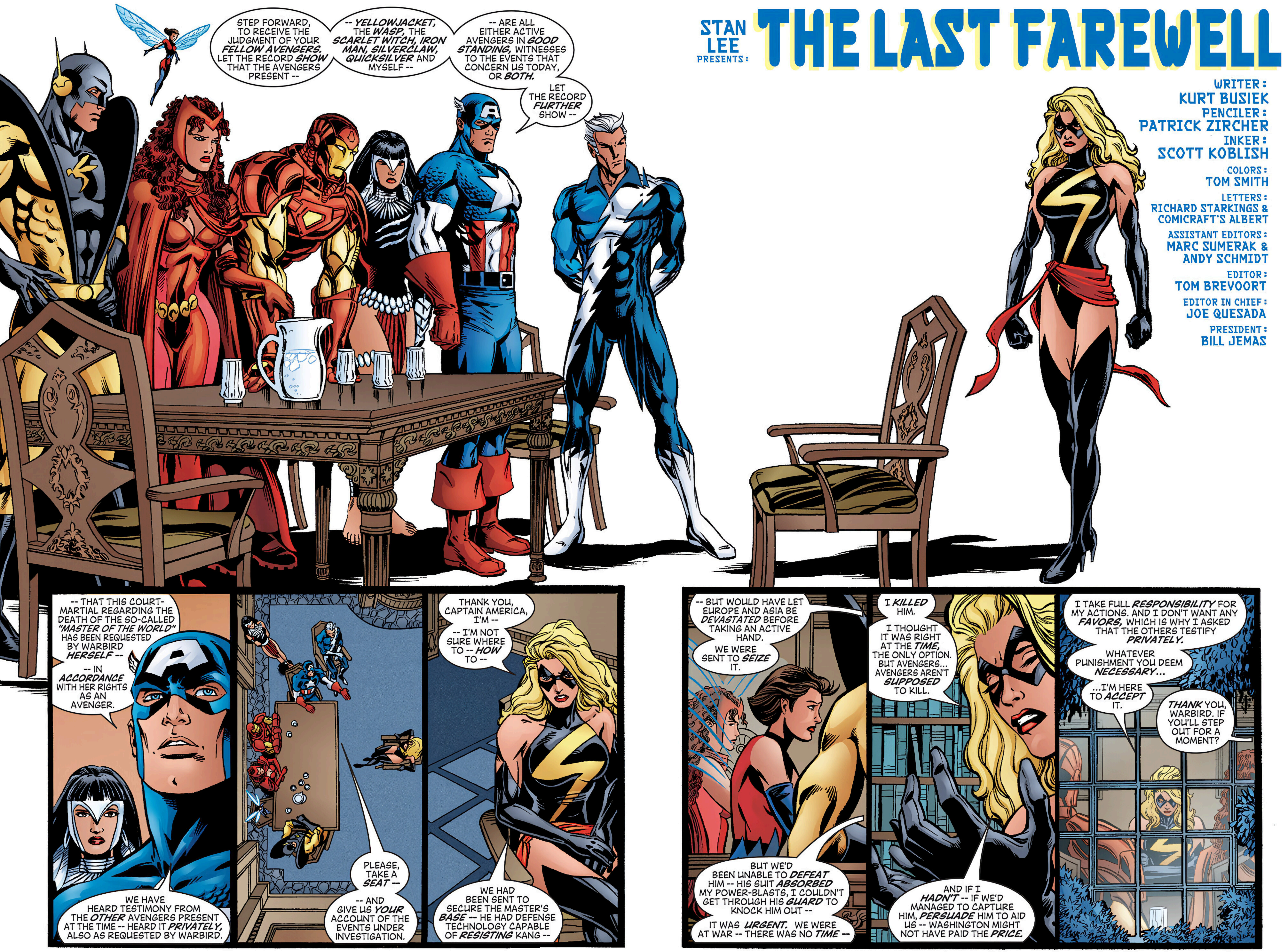

WASHINGTON DC.
-- THREE WEEKS SINCE THE ARMIES OF KANG WERE ROUTED AND AMERICA FREED --
-- BUT THE VIGIL HERE IN WASHINGTON DC, WHERE ALL THOSE TRAPPED IN THE CITY DIED DURING KANG'S ASSAULT, CONTINUES UNABATED.
IN MEMORY OF THOSE FALLEN
IT'S ESTIMATED THAT OVER 75,000 MOURNERS ARE HERE ON THE NATIONAL MALL TODAY --
-- HERE TO EXPRESS THEIR GRIEF AND SORROW AT THE ALMOST-UNIMAGINABLE LOSS THE NATION HAS SUFFERED --
-- TO EXPRESS THANKS TO THE AVENGERS, FOR THEIR ACTIONS IN FREEING THE WORLD FROM THE DOMINATION OF A MADMAN --
-- AND TO SAY GOODBYE TO THOSE WHO DIED -- TO RELATIVES, FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES --
-- A FINAL GOODBYE TO THOSE WHOSE VOICES HAVE BEEN FOREVER SILENCED.
FOREVER
NEW YORK CITY. AVENGERS MANSION
STEP FORWARD, CAROL SUSAN JANE DANVERS, A.K.A. WARBIRD.


STEP FORWARD, TO RECEIVE THE JUDGMENT OF YOUR FELLOW AVENGERS. LET THE RECORD SHOW THAT THE AVENGERS PRESENT --
-- YELLOWJACKET, THE WASP, THE SCARLET WITCH, IRON MAN, SILVERCLAW, QUICKSILVER AND MYSELF --
-- ARE ALL EITHER ACTIVE AVENGERS IN GOOD STANDING, WITNESSES TO THE EVENTS THAT CONCERN US TODAY, OR BOTH.
LET THE RECORD FURTHER SHOW --
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
THE LAST FAREWELL
WRITER: KURT BUSIEK
PENCILER: PATRICK ZIRCHER
INKER: SCOTT KOBLISH
COLORS: TOM SMITH
LETTERS: RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT
ASSISTANT EDITORS: MARC SUMERAK & ANDY SCHMIDT
EDITOR: TOM BREVOORT
EDITOR IN CHIEF: JOE QUESADA
PRESIDENT: BILL JEMAS
-- THAT THIS COURT-MARTIAL REGARDING THE DEATH OF THE SO-CALLED "MASTER OF THE WORLD" HAS BEEN REQUESTED BY WARBIRD HERSELF --
-- IN ACCORDANCE WITH HER RIGHTS AS AN AVENGER.
WE HAVE HEARD TESTIMONY FROM THE OTHER AVENGERS PRESENT AT THE TIME -- HEARD IT PRIVATELY, ALSO AS REQUESTED BY WARBIRD.
PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT --
-- AND GIVE US YOUR ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS UNDER INVESTIGATION.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA, I'M --
-- I'M NOT SURE WHERE TO -- HOW TO --
WE HAD BEEN SENT TO SECURE THE MASTER'S BASE -- HE HAD DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY CAPABLE OF RESISTING KANG --
-- BUT WOULD HAVE LET EUROPE AND ASIA BE DEVASTATED BEFORE TAKING AN ACTIVE HAND.
WE WERE SENT TO SEIZE IT.
BUT WE'D BEEN UNABLE TO DEFEAT HIM -- HIS SUIT ABSORBED MY POWER-BLASTS, I COULDN'T GET THROUGH HIS GUARD TO KNOCK HIM OUT --
IT WAS URGENT. WE WERE AT WAR -- THERE WAS NO TIME --
I KILLED HIM.
I THOUGHT IT WAS RIGHT AT THE TIME, THE ONLY OPTION. BUT AVENGERS... AVENGERS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO KILL.
AND IF I HADN'T -- IF WE'D MANAGED TO CAPTURE HIM, PERSUADE HIM TO AID US -- WASHINGTON MIGHT NOT HAVE PAID THE PRICE.
I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS. AND I DON'T WANT ANY FAVORS, WHICH IS WHY I ASKED THAT THE OTHERS TESTIFY PRIVATELY.
WHATEVER PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM NECESSARY...
...I'M HERE TO ACCEPT IT.
THANK YOU, WARBIRD. IF YOU'LL STEP OUT FOR A MOMENT?

AND SOON...
VERY WELL, WE ARE AGREED IN THIS?
WE ARE UNANIMOUS?
YES.
YES.
CAROL SUSAN JANE DANVERS, A.K.A. WARBIRD...
...THIS COURT-MARTIAL FINDS THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE EVENTS UNDER INVESTIGATION WERE EXTRAORDINARY AND UNUSUAL.
THE WORLD WAS AT WAR. AND THE AVENGERS WERE CONDUCTING A DULY-AUTHORIZED MILITARY MISSION ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES, TO SECURE THE OBJECTIVE AT ANY AND ALL COSTS.
ACCORDINGLY, WE FIND THAT WARBIRD WAS ACTING AS A SOLDIER IN THE SERVICE OF HER COUNTRY AS WELL AS AN AVENGER.
IN ADDITION, GIVEN THE POWER AND THREAT-LEVEL OF THE MASTER, WE AGREE THAT TIME WAS CRUCIAL AND THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENT ALTERNATIVE.
WE FURTHER FIND THAT THE AVENGERS INTERDICTION AGAINST THE USE OF LETHAL FORCE WAS SUSPENDED --
-- THAT THE DEATH OF THE MASTER, WHILE REGRETTABLE, WAS JUSTIFIABLE --
-- AND THAT NO PUNISHMENT OR CENSURE IS MERITED.
I -- I DON'T --
-- WHAT DID YOU SAY -- ?
HE SAID TO QUIT BEATING YOURSELF UP, BLUE-EYES. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, AND YOU'RE CLEARED.
NOW DO WE GET TO SEE A SMILE ON THAT FACE, OR WHAT?
CONGRATS, CAROL. IT TOOK A LOT TO DEMAND THAT COURT-MARTIAL, AND THE VERDICT WAS JUST.
BUT -- WASHINGTON --

LISTEN TO ME, CAROL. KANG DESTROYED WASHINGTON. THAT'S HIS CRIME, NOT YOURS. WHAT YOU DID HELPED US TAKE THE WORLD BACK FROM THAT MURDEROUS MONSTER.
FOCUS ON THAT.
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT, CAROL. AND THE AVENGERS HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR YOU. BUT THIS TIME...
CAROL, ARE YOU TEARING UP?
I GUESS I'M... STILL TAKING IT IN, WANDA.
I DIDN'T THINK IT'D GO THIS WAY -- I THOUGHT I'D BE KICKED OUT AGAIN, AT THE VERY LEAST. BUT I HAD TO FACE IT. HAD TO KNOW.
I FEEL LIKE I'VE TURNED A CORNER --
-- LIKE AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.
YOU AWAYS DID, CAROL. AND WE ALL KNEW IT. YOU JUST HAD TO REALIZE IT FOR YOURSELF.
NOW, C'MON...
...THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WAITING TO SEE YOU...
WOO-HOOOO!
CAROL!
WARBIRD!
CONGRATULATIONS!
-- ONLY POSSIBLE WAY --
WAY TO GO, GIRL!
KNEW IT'D TURN OUT THIS --
AND SOON, THE HALLS OF AVENGERS MANSION ARE ALIVE WITH CONVERSATION AND LAUGHTER --

-- AS OLD FRIENDS AND BATTLE-COMRADES LET OFF STEAM --
AYE, MILADY SHE-HULK, I BE FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE FIELDS OF FRANCE. WOULDST THOU TEST ME?
-- SURE, JACK OF HEARTS, BEING AN AVENGER CAN BE INTIMIDATING AT FIRST, BUT TAKE IT FROM AN OLD HAND, YOU'LL GET USED TO IT IN NO TIME...
VANCE -- !
THANK YOU, MS. PHOTON. AND I'D BE GRATEFUL IF YOU'D SPREAD THE WORD, ASKING THE OTHERS TO REMAIN HERE IN THE MANSION A BIT LONGER.
OF COURSE, JARVIS.
AND HAS THERE BEEN ANY SIGN OF THOR, WASP? ANY AT ALL?
NOT SINCE KANG'S DEFEAT, FIREBIRD. AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
IT'S AS IF HE JUST UP AND... VANISHED!
-- SPOKEN WITH HUNDREDS OF THE MOURNERS HERE TODAY. THEY COME FROM AS CLOSE BY AS VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND --
-- AND FROM AS FAR AWAY AS CALIFORNIA, HAWAII, EVEN THE PHILIPPINES.
BUT WHEREVER THEY COME FROM, THEY ALL SHARE A SINGLE PURPOSE --
IN MEMORY OF THOSE FALLEN
EXCUSE ME, SIR. BUT WE'VE HEARD FROM MISTER FREEMAN.
HE'LL BE HERE SHORTLY.
...
THANK YOU, JARVIS. LET ME KNOW WHEN HE ARRIVES.
HE'S TAKING THIS PRETTY HARD.
HE AND DUANE... THEY DIDN'T GET ALONG WELL, NOT ONCE THE TRIUNE BUSINESS CAME TO LIGHT.
AND NOW...

LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO.
SHE GOT HOME AT NOON. SINCE THEN, SHE HAS BEEN OUT IN THE FRONT YARD, GAZING SKYWARD AND HOPING. HOPING AND PRAYING.
AND NOW, PEGGY CHANDLER LETS OUT THE BREATH SHE'S BEEN HOLDING --
-- AS SHE REALIZES HER PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED.
OH MY LORD. OH MY DEAR LORD.
I GOT YOUR MESSAGE -- IT WAS ON THE MACHINE WHEN I GOT HOME --
-- BUT I DIDN'T DARE BELIEVE IT, NOT UNTIL --
BELIEVE IT, MRS. CHANDLER.
I TOLD YOU I'D DO MY BEST TO FIND YOUR MISSING HUSBAND AND RETURN HIM TO YOU. AND I'M SORRY FOR HOW LONG IT TOOK.
BUT HERE HE IS. YOUR HUSBAND... AND ONE MORE.
AND NOW...
...IF I CAN DO THIS RIGHT...

WE... WE'RE BACK...!
OH, MAN...!
I HAVEN'T TAKEN THIS THING OFF... HAVEN'T BREATHED AIR FOR MYSELF, FELT SUNSHINE ON MY FACE... NOT SINCE 1958...!
OH, HAL! AND CHUCK! BOTH OF YOU! BOTH OF YOU, RETURNED TO ME -- !
EASY THERE, OLD GIRL...
PEG! BEEN A WHILE, SISTER-IN-LAW, BEEN A WHILE -- BUT YOU'RE STILL THE CUTEST CHICK IN THE WHOLE SOUTHWEST -- !
I -- I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, TRIATHLON. I'LL NEVER STOP THANKING YOU, NEVER...!
I'VE GOT A QUESTION, THOUGH -- HOW COME I'M LIKE THIS, RESTORED TO A PHYSICAL FORM? I WAS CAUGHT IN THAT EXPLOSION, BACK IN '58...
YES. YOUR BODY WAS CONVERTED TO ENERGY BY THAT EXPLOSION. THAT'S WHAT LET YOU MERGE WITH YOUR BROTHER -- BECOME THE 3-D MAN.
ALL I DID WAS USE THE LAST OF THE POWER I'D ABSORBED -- TO SEPARATE YOU -- AND CONVERT THAT ENERGY BACK.
YOU'VE MISSED A LOT OF YEARS, CHUCK. BUT AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT FAMILY TO HELP YOU START OVER...
AND LIKE PEGGY SAID, DELROY, WE'LL BE GRATEFUL TO YOU FOREVER.
I CAN FEEL IT -- THE POWERS ARE GONE. CHUCK AND I AREN'T THE 3-D MAN ANY MORE. ARE YOU...?
BACK TO NORMAL. NO COSMIC JUICE, BUT THE OLD TRIPLE-POWERS ARE BACK.
SO... WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?
I'M NOT SURE.
THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING'S TRYING TO REORGANIZE, AND I HOPE THEY MAKE IT -- THEY'VE DONE A LOT OF GOOD, EVEN IF THEIR LEADERSHIP WAS CORRUPT.
THEY'VE ASKED ME TO BE PART OF IT, BUT I DON'T THINK I WILL... NOT NOW, AT LEAST.

I'LL GO BACK TO NEW YORK, TO THE AVENGERS, AT LEAST FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
THE WORLD'S BEEN THROUGH A BAD TIME --
-- AND I THINK IT NEEDS ALL THE HELP IT CAN GET TO REBUILD.
HE STANDS AMONG THEM -- OF THEM, BUT APART FROM THEM AS WELL --
-- AND LISTENS TO THE EBB AND FLOW OF THEIR CHATTER.
THEY HAVE COME TO WATCH. TO FEEL LIKE A PART OF THE REBUILDING, THE REBIRTH.
THE CONSTRUCTION CREWS HAVE BEEN WORKING 'ROUND THE CLOCK -- NIGHTS AS WELL AS DAYS --
-- WORKING TO REBUILD THE U.N. BUILDING AS SWIFTLY AS POSSIBLE --
-- MAKING IT, WHETHER CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, A SYMBOL, AN AFFIRMATION THAT THE WAR IS OVER.
AND EVERY DAY, EVERY NIGHT, NEW YORK HAS COME OUT TO SUPPORT THEM.
THEY ARE AN ASTONISHINGLY RESILIENT RACE, THESE HUMANS. IF HE LIVES FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, HE MAY NEVER --
VICTOR?

VICTOR SHADE? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE CHICAGO!
DARBY?
IT IS... PLEASANT TO SEE YOU, DARBY. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO NEW YORK?
THAT, MOSTLY.
THE COMPANY I WORK FOR DOES WHAT WE CALL "IMPOSSIBLE ENGINEERING." YOU WANT TO GET A COMPLETE MEDICAL SUITE TO THE TOP OF EVEREST --
-- OR A WEDDING PARTY DOWN TO THE MAIN BALLROOM OF THE TITANIC, WE'RE WHO YOU CALL.
WE'VE BEEN VOLUNTEERING, DOING WHAT WE CAN TO MAKE THE REBUILDING GO FASTER. I'VE BEEN HELPING OUT ON THE U.N. PROJECT.
IT'S GREAT TO RUN INTO YOU, THOUGH...
...YOU KINDA... VANISHED ON US THERE IN CHICAGO.
I APOLOGIZE. I SHOULD EXPLAIN. VICTOR SHADE...
...IS MERELY A HOLOGRAPHIC EXTERIOR, A HOLLOW SHELL. I AM IN TRUTH THE VISION, THE ANDROID MEMBER OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS.
WHEN I MET YOU, I WAS ON A SURVEILLANCE MISSION...
YEAH, I KINDA THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
YOU... KNEW?
WELL, NOT THEN. BUT PETE SAW YOU FLYING AWAY FROM THE BAR...
...AND WITH THE AVENGERS ALL OVER THE NEWS RIGHT AFTER THAT, I SORTA PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER.
I APOLOGIZE AGAIN. I WAS... UNSETTLED, AND WAS SPENDING TIME IN HUMAN FORM, ATTEMPTING TO CONNECT WITH HUMANITY --
-- TO DISCOVER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE HUMAN. IF MY DECEPTION HARMED YOU IN ANY WAY --
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR, VIC. YOU'RE A GREAT GUY TO TALK TO, OR TO GO TO A BALL GAME WITH --
-- EVEN IF YOU DO ROOT FOR THE WRONG TEAMS.

MAYBE VICTOR'S NOT AS HOLLOW AS YOU THINK. LOOK, IF YOU EVER WANT TO CONNECT WITH YOUR HUMANITY AGAIN... HERE'S MY CARD.
WE COULD MEET FOR DRINKS, CATCH A GAME, WHATEVER.
JUST DON'T BE A STRANGER!
I... THANK YOU.
THIS IS ANOTHER PIECE OF IT, HE REALIZES. ANOTHER THING THAT HUMANITY BRINGS WITH IT.
UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS TO ONE'S OWN PAST.
AN ODD EXPERIENCE...
...BUT ON THE WHOLE...
...A DECIDEDLY PLEASANT ONE...
-- WAS TRAPPED OUTSIDE THE CITY WHEN THE WEAPON-WALLS WENT UP, IMPRISONING EVERYONE STILL INSIDE.
HIS WIFE AND YOUNG SON, HOWEVER, WERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL, AND WHEN CALAMITY STRUCK --
MAN. MAN, JUST THINK ABOUT IT...
IN MEMORY OF THOSE FALLEN
YOU SAID IT, LIVING LIGHTNING..
BUT JUST REMEMBER -- IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. MUCH WORSE.
AND NOT TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT TOO DRASTICALLY, BUT I HAVEN'T EATEN SINCE I GOT DOWN HERE FROM CANADA.
JARVIS, IS THERE ANY CHANCE I COULD RUSTLE UP A SANDWICH, OR --
I AM SORRY, STINGRAY -- BUT THE KITCHEN IS TEMPORARILY... OUT OF ORDER. IF YOU COULD --
Bing Bong
EXCUSE ME, SIR. THE DOOR.

-- AND THAT'S THE LATEST ON WHAT HAPPENED UP HERE, IRON MAN.
WHEN WE FAILED TO PUNCH IN THE PROPER OVERRIDE CODE, THE MASTER'S COMPUTERS STARTED A COUNTDOWN --
-- AND WE WERE BARELY ABLE TO EVACUATE BEFORE THE WHOLE COMMAND BASE CRUMBLED TO DUST AROUND US. THE COMMAND BASE --
-- AND ALL THE WEAPON-WALLS HE'D CREATED THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA.
AND THERE'S NOTHING LEFT, BLACK KNIGHT?
NOTHING WE CAN MAKE ANY SENSE OF, AT LEAST...
"...JUST A BIG HOLLOW AREA IN THE ICE -- AND THIS WEIRD INORGANIC DUST WE CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF.
"I THINK ABOUT WHAT WE COULD HAVE LEARNED FROM IT, WHAT THAT ALIEN TECHNOLOGY COULD HAVE TAUGHT US..."
...BUT WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF PART OF IT SLIPPED AWAY, OR IF THE WHOLE BASE SELF-DESTRUCTED.
IT'S JUST... GONE.
SOLVES SOME OF OUR CLEAN-UP PROBLEM, BUT...
THAT'S THE WAY IT IS WITH THEM, DANE. THE MASTER'S KILLED, HIS BASE DISSOLVES. KANG'S DEFEATED...
...AND HE FLEES INTO ANY OF THE MYRIAD BRANCHES OF THE TIMESTREAM, WHERE WE HAVE NO WAY TO TRACK HIM...
...AND US? WE JUST GET TO DEAL WITH THE REPERCUSSIONS.
WITH WHATEVER GOT LEFT BEHIND.
SIR?
MISTER FREEMAN IS HERE, SIR.
THANK YOU, JARVIS...

"...JUST SHOW HIM TO THE OFFICE, IF YOU WOULD. TELL HIM I'LL BE THERE IN A FEW MINUTES."
MISTER FREEMAN?
PLEASE, IRON MAN --
-- MAKE IT "DEREK."
I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, DEREK. YOUR BROTHER --
IT'S OUR LOSS, TOO. OUR LOSS.
THANKS.
HE LOVED WORKING HERE, YOU KNOW. BEING YOUR FEDERAL SECURITY LIAISON, WORKING DIRECTLY WITH YOU --
HE WAS A BIG FAN OF THE AVENGERS, AND OF THE WORK YOU DO.
RIGHT FROM THE START, HE COLLECTED ALL THE MEMORABILIA --
-- THE TOYS, THE POSTERS -- HE HAD DOZENS OF SCRAPBOOKS WITH NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE STORIES --
HE FOLLOWED YOUR ADVENTURES THE WAY OTHER PEOPLE FOLLOW SPORTS TEAMS --
IF YOU NEED EXTRA MONEY
FREEMAN

AND TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH YOU, TO BE A PART OF IT ALL --
I'D NEVER SEEN HIM HAPPIER.
IT WAS A REFRESHING CHANGE TO HAVE SOMEONE SO ENTHUSIASTIC TO WORK WITH. WE HAVEN'T HAD THE BEST OF LUCK WITH OUR LIAISONS IN THE PAST.
DUANE WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR, IN THAT REGARD.
PLUS, HE WAS CONSCIENTIOUS, ENERGETIC...
HE WAS... WAS...
IRON MAN? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
I ASKED TO BE THE ONE TO MEET WITH YOU, WHEN YOU CAME TO COLLECT YOUR BROTHER'S BELONGINGS.
I'M NOT 100% SURE WHY.
DUANE AND I...
...THE AVENGERS HAD SOME TROUBLE WITH THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING. WHEN I FOUND OUT DUANE WAS A MEMBER... I DIDN'T TAKE IT WELL.
THINGS WERE...
...WELL, THEY WEREN'T EASY BETWEEN US.

IN THE END, WE LEARNED THE TRUTH. THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING WASN'T ITSELF CORRUPT --
-- JUST ITS FOUNDER, JONATHAN TREMONT, AND SOME OF HIS TOP AIDES. BUT BY THEN, WASHINGTON WAS GONE.
AND DUANE WITH IT.
I'VE WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO HIM EVER SINCE.
BUT IT'S TOO LATE. WE ENDED ON A BAD NOTE, AND THAT'LL NEVER CHANGE.
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW, IRON MAN. I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH THE PAPERS RECOVERED FROM DUANE'S WASHINGTON OFFICE, AND SOME OF HIS NOTES...
HE'D BEEN DOING SOME CHECKING. HE MAY HAVE BEEN A TRIUNE MEMBER, BUT HE WAS ALSO YOUR SECURITY LIAISON, AND HE TOOK THAT VERY SERIOUSLY.
ACCORDING TO HIS NOTES, THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING KNEW VARIOUS AVENGERS PRIORITY FREQUENCIES, AND HE WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY.
HIS NOTES WERE INCONCLUSIVE. BUT THEY INDICATED THAT WHEN A TRIUNE MEMBER UNDERWENT ONE OF THE UNDERSTANDING'S "MENTAL CLEANSING RITUALS" --
-- IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT JONATHAN TREMONT WAS ABLE TO READ THEIR MINDS.

HE THOUGHT THE LEAKS HAD COME THROUGH HIM. THROUGH HIS MIND, HIS MEMORIES.
ONE OF THE THINGS WE FOUND IN HIS OFFICE WAS A DRAFT OF A RESIGNATION LETTER.
A WHAT?
BUT -- EVEN IF THAT WAS THE CASE, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN DUANE'S FAULT. HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN.
WE COULD HAVE TAKEN STEPS, BUILT SAFEGUARDS AGAINST --
THERE'D HAVE BEEN NO NEED FOR HIM TO RESIGN -- !
HE'D HAVE BEEN GRATIFIED TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT.
HE HAD ENORMOUS RESPECT FOR YOU.
OH, I DON'T THINK --
HOLD IT.
DUANE TOLD ME SOMETHING ONCE, ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN TRIATHLON JOINED THE TEAM.
HE SAID YOU'D BEEN OPPOSED TO IT, BECAUSE OF TRIATHLON'S TRIUNE AFFILIATION --
-- AND HE HAD TO GET IN YOUR FACE ABOUT IT, TELLING YOU YOU WERE BEING UNFAIR, THAT IT WAS GUILT BY ASSOCIATION.
HE SAID YOU HATED HEARING THAT. HATED IT LIKE FIRE.
BUT HE ALSO SAID YOU LISTENED. AND THAT YOU BACKED DOWN. REALIZED YOU WERE WRONG, AND CHANGED COURSE.
ALL THAT POWER IN YOUR HANDS, HE SAID AND YOU STILL KEPT YOUR BRAIN IN CONTROL, NO MATTER HOW ANGRY YOU WERE.
HE SAID THAT'S THE MARK OF A TRULY HONORABLE MAN.

I WOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT NOT HAVING HAD THE CHANCE TO TELL HIM WHAT YOU THOUGHT. DUANE WAS ALWAYS THE SMART ONE IN THE FAMILY.
HE ALWAYS KNEW THE SCORE. BELIEVE ME, HE KNEW.
THANKS FOR MEETING WITH ME.
GOLIATH
The Wasp
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE
C'MON, JARVIS, AT LEAST TELL US WHAT WE'RE WAITING --
PLEASE, PLEASE -- IF YOU'LL ONLY BE PATIENT A FEW MINUTES LONGER...
OKAY, JARV. JUST DON'T LET IT WAIT TILL WE GET ANGRY.
YOU WOULDN'T LIKE US WHEN WE'RE ANGRY...
...AND I THINK... I THINK I MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE ONE THAT DROVE THOR AWAY, MADE HIM VANISH LIKE THAT.
HE'D BEEN... HE'D BEEN TALKING ABOUT LEAVING THE TEAM, WHEN THIS WAR WAS OVER. OF DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM MORTAL AFFAIRS.
I TRIED TO GET HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND. BUT THEN... I LOST MY TEMPER, I YELLED AT HIM. AND WHEN I TRIED TO APOLOGIZE...
...HE WOULDN'T EVEN SPEAK TO ME.
OH, FIREBIRD, I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T --
I'M SURE THAT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH --
AHEM!
EXCUSE ME, EVERYBODY --
-- I THANK YOU ALL FOR WAITING SO PATIENTLY, AND IF YOU'LL JUST TURN YOUR ATTENTION THIS WAY FOR A MOMENT --
HEY!
WHOA!
WHAT IN THE --?

HO, AVENGERS! HO, MY COMRADES!
WE HAVE BEEN VICTORIOUS -- VICTORIOUS AGAINST A MOST MIGHTY AND TERRIBLE ENEMY -- AND THE TIME HAS COME TO CELEBRATE!
IN GLEAMING ASGARD, SUCH A VICTORY WOULD BE MARKED BY SIX DAYS OF FEASTING, JOUSTS, AND ENTERTAINMENTS MOST VARIED AND DIVERTING --
-- AND WHILE I FEAR THAT SUCH A FLOOD OF MERRIMENTS WOULD BE TOO MUCH FOR THIS PARTICULAR ASSEMBLAGE --
-- I HAVE BORROWED THE FINEST OF ASGARD'S IMPERIAL CHEFS, THAT THOU MIGHT KNOW A TASTE OF THE HONOR THOU DOST DESERVE.
COME, THEN! TO TABLE -- AND LET US SEE IF THOU BE MIGHTY TRENCHERMEN AS WELL AS MIGHTY WARRIORS!
AND I ASSURE THEE, FRIEND JARVIS, THAT BY EVENING'S END...
...THY KITCHEN WILL BE AS SPOTLESS AS IT WAS THIS MORN.
MOST APPRECIATED, SIR.

AND SOON...
A MOMENT, MY FRIENDS.
FOR I DO HAVE SOME FEW REMARKS TO MAKE, ERE WE SET TO.
I HAD COME TO FEAR, OF LATE, THAT AN IMMORTAL LIKE MYSELF HAD NO PLACE HERE ON MIDGARD --
-- THAT THE TIES I DID MAKE WITH MORTALS WOULD SURELY BE TOO FLEETING, THE PAIN OF INEVITABLE LOSS TOO GREAT.
BUT I WAS SHOWN THE ERROR OF MY WAYS BY A WISE YOUNG WOMAN...
...A WOMAN COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE MY FOOLISHNESS, TO OPEN MY EYES.
AND NOW I RAISE MY GLASS TO HER --
-- TO FIREBIRD! SHE WHO AIDED A GOD BY TREATING HIM AS THE FOOL HE WAS!
TRULY, SHE GAVE ME MUCH TO THINK ON THESE PAST WEEKS. AND I CAME TO UNDERSTAND.
IT IS THE BONDS WE MAKE THAT WE KNOW WILL BE BROKEN, THOSE WE LOVE WHO WE KNOW WILL NOT BE WITH US FOREVER --
-- THAT ARE ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WILL ONE DAY BE GONE.
THOSE ARE THE BONDS WE MUST TAKE JOY IN, THE COMRADES WE MUST CELEBRATE NOW, WHILE THEY REMAIN NEAR TO US.
TODAY, MY FRIENDS, WE STAND IN THE MIDST OF A HARD-FOUGHT VICTORY.
AND WE STAND AMID GRIEVOUS LOSSES.
AND I CHARGE THEE, AS WE DO IN ASGARD, AND AS DO THE HEROES OF VALHALLA ITSELF...
TAKE JOY IN THE VICTORY -- JOY THAT RIGHT HATH BEEN DONE AND PEACE RESTORED --

-- AND HONOR THOSE WE HAVE LOST --
-- BY KEEPING THEM IN OUR HEARTS, WHERE THEY MAY LIVE FOREVER.
TO MIDGARD, MY FRIENDS! TO THE AVENGERS!
AND TO HUMANITY ITSELF!
ALL RIGHT, TIN MAN, 'FESS UP.
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY THE QUIET DEPARTURE?
JUST NOT IN A PARTY MOOD, I SUPPOSE.
AND I'VE GOT SOMETHING I WANT TO DO...
I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT PLANNED, TONY. I'LL GO WITH YOU.
AND I THINK THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE HERE WHO'LL WANT TO COME, TOO...

WASHINGTON DC. THE NATIONAL MALL.
OF THOSE FALLEN
HE WAS SO UTTERLY DEDICATED. HE HAD NO FEAR, NO FEAR AT ALL.
HE EVEN TOOK ON THOR, WHEN HE THOUGHT HE HAD TO.
HE DID?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT -- YOU WEREN'T THERE FOR THAT. YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT.
HE ACTUALLY BACKED THOR UP A STEP. THOR WAS TOWERING OVER HIM, IN FULL WRATHFUL-GOD MODE --
--BUT DUANE DIDN'T GIVE AN INCH.
NOT AN INCH...

IT WAS SOMETHING TO SEE, JAN. SOMETHING FOR THE BOOKS.
YES. FOR THE BOOKS.
IN MEMORY OF
GOODBYE, DUANE.
YOU'LL BE MISSED.
THE AVENGERS
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ 58 NOV IND
THOR
Iron Man
"YOU'LL ALL BE MISSED."
FIN.

AVENGERS FAST FACTS
Inside Info for the Fan on the Go-Go-Go!
He's GOLIATH -- a.k.a. Dr. HENRY PYM! And when he wants to grow to giant size, all he has to do is CONCENTRATE--
-- and the AMAZING MICROSCOPIC PYM PARTICLES in his blood go into ACTION!
They draw on BIO-MASS from another DIMENSION, bringing it TO Dr. Pym --
-- and allowing him to grow to twenty, thirty -- even a HUNDRED feet in height!
And once he's done with whatever SUPERHUMAN FEAT he set out to ACCOMPLISH --
-- he simply activates those amazing PYM PARTICLES again --
-- and SHRINKS back down to NORMAL SIZE --
-- RETURNING that bio-mass to the dimension it CAME FROM!

WHATEVER costumed identity he's using -- the astonishing ANT-MAN, the fast-flying YELLOWJACKET, GIANT-MAN or GOLIATH --
-- PYM PARTICLES allow him to grow or shrink to WHATEVER SIZE HE NEEDS!
Once, all that growing and shrinking put an enormous STRAIN on his system -- causing dire HEALTH PROBLEMS!
But those days are OVER!
Now, he can shift his mass BACK and FORTH across the dimensional gulf as much as he WANTS --
-- with NO ill effects!
Yes, after a long and tumultuous HISTORY, the Avenger called GOLIATH is once again an ESSENTIAL PLAYER.
Thanks to his own BIOCHEMICAL GENIUS, his powers are at their PEAK --
-- and are PERFECTLY SAFE!
...AND THAT'S THE FACTS!
AVENGERS MANSION, MANHATTAN.
HIS BREATHING -- IT'S SO SHALLOW!
LET'S MOVE -- MOVE --

AND THERE CAME A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WERE UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT! ON THAT DAY THE AVENGERS WERE BORN -- TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE HERO COULD WITHSTAND!
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE MIGHTY AVENGERS IN...
THE THIRD MAN
HIS NAME IS DR. HENRY PYM -- A.K.A., AT THE MOMENT, YELLOWJACKET.
HE HAD BEEN WITH AN AVENGERS SQUAD IN CANADA, PROTECTING PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND FROM AN INVASION LED BY THE SUB-SEA BARBARIAN ATTUMA.
HE HAD BEEN ACTING STRANGELY, BUT BEFORE THE WASP, HIS EX-WIFE, LOVER AND TEAM LEADER, HAD A CHANCE TO ADDRESS IT WITH HIM --
-- HE COLLAPSED.
-- WE'VE GOT TO GET HANK TO THE MEDI-LAB -- FAST!
HE WAS RUSHED BY QUINJET TO AVENGERS MANSION, WHERE SHE HAD ARRANGED TO MEET --
KURT BUSIEK WRITER IVAN REIS PENCILER SCOTT HANNA INKER
TOM SMITH COLORS RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

DR. FOSTER! YOU MADE IT!
OF COURSE, JAN. YOUR MESSAGE INDICATED IT WAS EXTREMELY URGENT, SO I DROPPED EVERYTHING.
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE --
GOOD LORD. HE'S TRANSLUCENT!
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
WE DON'T KNOW, MA'AM. HE JUST -- WELL, HE JUST IS.
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP HIM, JANE. IF WE -- IF WE LOSE HIM -- !
HEY, EASY THERE. I'M SURE HE'LL BE -- I MEAN -- YOU'VE HAD FREAKIER THAN THIS HAPPEN, AN' IT WAS FINE, RIGHT?
NOT THAT I'M SAYIN' THIS IS FREAKY -- I JUST --
AND AS TRIATHLON SEARCHES FOR THE RIGHT WORDS --
JAN!
WHEW! SOMEONE ELSE!
I CAME AS QUICKLY AS I COULD, JAN. IS THERE ANY NEWS? ANYTHING I CAN DO -- ?
NO NEWS, PHOTON. NOT YET. BUT I THOUGHT -- I'D ASKED YOU TO GO TO PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, BACKSTOP THE OTHERS --

I JUST CAME FROM THERE -- AND EVERYTHING'S FINE. HERCULES HAS ARRIVED TO HELP OUT -- THE SCARLET WITCH AND STINGRAY HAVE THINGS WELL IN HAND --
I CAN BE BACK THERE IN SECONDS, IF NEEDED, BUT RIGHT NOW I THOUGHT YOU COULD USE ANOTHER FRIENDLY FACE...
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT, MONICA. I JUST DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE TEAM UNDERSTAFFED WHILE WE --
J-JAN...
HANK? DON'T TRY TO TALK, HONEY. JANE FOSTER'S HERE, AND SHE'LL FIND OUT WHAT'S WRONG...
NO... NO... GOTTA SAY SOMETHING...
IT'S... IMPORTANT...
YOU... YOU GOT TO... CHECK ON THE OTHER ONE... ON FAKE HANK...
HORNET'S HIDEAWAY... MAPLE TREE OUT FRONT... YOU'LL NEED CODE TO SHUT DOWN VIBRA-SCREEN... NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT HIM... HE'LL STARVE...
WHAT? ANOTHER HANK? A FAKE HANK?
WHAT DO YOU M --
G-GO, JAN. JUST... JUST 'CAUSE HE'S FAKE...
...DOESN'T MEAN... SHOULD BE LEFT TO DIE...
SHRINKING TO INSECT SIZE, SHE TAKES DECISIVE, IF CONFUSED, ACTION...
HERE'S THE TREE HE MEANT --
-- AND THIS COMM-UNIT'LL SEND OUT WHAT HE SAID WAS THE CODE-SIGNAL, BUT I DON'T SEE...
AKH!
IT -- IT'S HERE! THE HORNET'S HIDEAWAY, FROM WHEN HE WAS FIRST YELLOWJACKET!
HAS IT -- HAS IT BEEN HERE ALL THESE YEARS? RIGHT IN OUR FRONT YARD...?

SWIFTLY SHE ENTERS THE TINY STRUCTURE, WHERE...
OH MY LORD!
HANK!
BUT -- BUT --
H-HONEY --
WHAT'S GOING ON?
HOW DID THIS -- WHO ARE -- ?
JAN... THANK HEAVEN... YOU FOUND ME...
SUCKER-PUNCHED ON STREET... KIDNAPPED...
KEPT ME HERE... FED ME INTRAVENOUSLY...
HONEY, YOU'VE GOT TO BE CAREFUL... HE MIGHT TRY...
...TO INFILTRATE AVENGERS...
I -- I --
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
LET'S JUST --
"-- LET'S GET YOU INSIDE -- !"
TWO OF HIM.
I KNEW HE'D BEEN ACTING STRANGELY, BUT I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST ON AN UPSWING. I NEVER THOUGHT -- NEVER SUSPECTED --

LOOK AT ME. TEAM LEADER, AND I CAN BARELY FORM SENTENCES.
TELL ME IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT, MONICA. TELL ME IT'LL BE FINE.
I'M SURE IT'LL ALL WORK OUT, JAN. HANK'S TOUGH -- YOU'LL SEE.
AND MONICA RAMBEAU, THE DETACHED-SERVICE AVENGER KNOWN AS PHOTON, WONDERS FOR A MOMENT --
-- WHERE'S TRIATHLON? HE SEEMED SO ILL AT EASE...
THE AVENGERS SITUATION ROOM.
THE STATUS GLOBE SHIFTS STEADILY THROUGH A SERIES OF DISPLAYS, SHOWING THE LOCATION OF ACTIVE AVENGERS, INACTIVE AVENGERS --
-- MENACES DEEMED DANGEROUS ENOUGH TO STAY ON CONSTANT ALERT FOR --
RED SKULL
STATUS: ACTIVE
ALKHEMA STATUS: AT LARGE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: VIRGINIA
SUPREME INTELLEGENCE STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: HALA
HIGH EVOLUTIONARY STATUS: AT LARGE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: EARTH ORBIT/NORTH POLE
DOCTOR DOOM STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: PLANET DOOM
HULK STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: VIRGINIA
EXEMPLARS STATUS: AT LARGE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: NEW YORK
LOKI STATUS: AT LARGE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: ASGARD
ATTUMA STATUS: CRISIS LAST KNOWN LOCATION: PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
MODOK/A.I.M. STATUS: ACTIVE LAST KNOWN LOCATION: MULTIPLE BASES
MANDARIN STATUS: OFFICALLY DECEASED/DISPUTED LAST KNOWN LOCATION: CHELYABINSK
KANG
MENACES DEEMED DANGEROUS ENOUGH --
JONATHAN TREMONT TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING STATUS: UNKNOWN LAST KNOWN LOCATION: WORLDWIDE/TEXAS

DAMMIT!
AND AS HE LEAVES -- THE DISPLAY CYCLES ONWARD --
HAWKEYE
JUSTICE
STATUS : ON LEAVE
LAST KNOWN LOCATION :
CAP D'ANTIBES
FIRESTAR
STATUS : ON LEAVE
LAST KNOWN LOCATION :
CAP D'ANTIBES
WHAT IS IT, JANE? WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
I'M SORRY, JAN, I TRULY AM...
...BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.
BUT -- YOU HAVE TO! HE'S GROWING STEADILY WEAKER!
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING -- WE CAN'T JUST ABANDON HIM!
I AGREE. BUT WHATEVER'S WRONG, IT'S BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE.
WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO REACH SPECIALISTS LIKE REED RICHARDS OR HENRY McCOY --
-- AND UNFORTUNATELY, HANK HIMSELF IS THE WORLD'S LEADING BIO-CHEMIST, AND HE CAN'T --
I HAVE AN IDEA. BUT YOU WON'T LIKE IT.

TRIATHLON...?
THERE'S SOME KINDA SPLIT HERE, MAYBE -- LIKE THE MAN'S BEEN DIVIDED INTO TWO BEINGS, AND NEITHER ONE'S ABLE TO SURVIVE ON ITS OWN.
AND, WELL, THIS KINDA SPLIT ISN'T THEIR USUAL LINE --
-- BUT JONATHAN TREMONT AND THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING ARE ALL ABOUT HEALING RIFTS. BODY AND SPIRIT, HEART AND MIND...
IT'S A LONGSHOT, MAYBE, BUT --
I -- I DON'T KNOW, TRIATHLON. THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING?
I MEAN -- I KNOW YOU TRUST THEM, AND I DON'T MEAN ANY OFFENSE -- BUT THE WAY THEY WENT AFTER US IN THE MEDIA --
-- PLANTED PROTESTERS AT OUR GATES -- !
YOU DON'T KNOW THEY DID THAT! YOU DON'T KNOW THEY DID THAT!
I SAID YOU WOULDN'T LIKE IT. IT'S A CHANCE, THOUGH -- AND THE TRIUNES SAVED ME WHEN I NEEDED IT. PUT ME BACK TOGETHER -- AWAKENED MY POWERS --
IT'S --
-- IT'S ALL I GOT TO OFFER A GUY WHO WAS ALWAYS DECENT TO ME.
BUT FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.
NO -- NO, WAIT!
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM. AND I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE TO TRY...!

CHAPTER TWO: DESPERATE MEASURES
CALLEYVILLE, TEXAS.
WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING.
THE UNDERSTANDING HAS BEEN CALLED A SELF-HELP GROUP, A NEW AGE RELIGION, A CULT PREYING ON THE WEAK-MINDED, AND MORE.
AND SINCE THE AVENGERS SUSPECTED THE UNDERSTANDING OF HARBORING A DANGEROUS SUPER-VILLAIN --
WELCOME, WELCOME!
YOU HAVE MY DEEPEST SYMPATHIES ON DR. PYM'S CONDITION, MADAME WASP -- AND I AM ENTIRELY AT YOUR SERVICE.
I, AH -- THANK YOU, MISTER TREMONT.
I KNOW OUR TWO ORGANIZATIONS HAVEN'T, AH, SEEN EYE-TO-EYE IN THE PAST --
-- THERE HAS BEEN BAD BLOOD BETWEEN THE AVENGERS AND THE TRIUNE --
-- EXTENDING TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH TRIATHLON, THE UNDERSTANDING'S MOST FAMOUS ADHERENT, JOINED THE TEAM.
PLEASE, MS. VAN DYNE -- DON'T GIVE IT A MOMENT'S THOUGHT. I KNOW OF YOUR RESERVATIONS, AND CAN'T HELP BUT UNDERSTAND THEM.
WE ARE... A DIFFICULT CONCEPT FOR OUTSIDERS.
BUT DELROY -- TRIATHLON -- HAS BROUGHT ME UP TO DATE ON THE PROBLEMS THE GOOD DOCTOR IS EXPERIENCING, AND I ASSURE YOU --

-- THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING MEANS DR. PYM AND THE AVENGERS NO HARM, AND I WILL DO ALL I CAN TO SAVE THE LIFE AT RISK HERE.
I WILL NOT ENDANGER IT FURTHER. BELIEVE ME.
SHORTLY, IN THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING'S MEDICAL BAY...
I CAN ALREADY TELL THAT DELROY'S HYPOTHESIS WAS CORRECT -- THESE ARE INDEED TWO ASPECTS OF THE SAME MAN --
-- DIVIDED BY A PROCESS I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
AND PLEASE, MS. VAN DYNE -- DO NOT BE CONCERNED AT THE SIGHT OF ALL THIS APPARATUS.
MOST OF IT ACTS ON ME, NOT THEM. IT ALLOWS ME TO CHANNEL THE THREE-FOLD ENERGY THAT PERMEATES ALL MATTER, THOUGHT AND SPIRIT --
-- TO FOCUS IT --
-- AND TO REACH INTO HENRY'S AILING, FRAGMENTED SPIRIT --
-- AND HOPEFULLY, TO BRING ABOUT A NEW UNITY!
GOT TO... GOT TO PROTECT JAN... KEEP HER FROM HARM...
SHIELD HER FROM...
JAN... JAN, WHERE ARE YOU...?
GOT TO... TO FIND HER... SHE NEEDS ME, WANTS ME...
HOW STRANGE.
I SENSE A DEEP DIVISION -- DEEPER THAN I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE. IT IS ALMOST AS IF THE TWO HALVES ARE REJECTING ONE ANOTHER --
-- EACH WORKING TO FORCE ITS OPPOSITE NUMBER FURTHER AWAY.
BUT THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE. THEY CANNOT LAST LONG APART -- AND SO THEY MUST BE MADE --

-- TO CONFRONT ONE ANOTHER!
THERE IS A SMELL LIKE BURNING MOSS, AND PEPPERMINT --
-- AND ELSEWHERE, IN A PLACE THAT EXISTS ON NO MAP, IN NO COUNTRY --
-- BUT WHICH, FOR ALL THAT, IS AS REAL AS A THOUGHT AND AS VAST AS THE UNIVERSE ITSELF --
WH-WHAT --
WHERE -- WHERE AM -- ?
HUH?
HM?
YOU!
SO IT SEEMS.
AND HEY, YOU TOO...!

SO WHAT'S THE PHRASE? "ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT..."?
I'M SURE YOU'D KNOW...
SHUT UP -- I'M THINKING. AND THERE'S NO MOON HERE.
I KNEW SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED -- BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT. WHEN THE AVENGERS WERE IN COSTA VERDE --
-- WHEN I WAS TRANSFORMED BY KULAN GATH'S SPELL INTO A VERSION OF YOU --
-- THAT'S WHEN THE SYMPTOMS STARTED! THAT'S WHEN YOU CAME INTO EXISTENCE!
IT WAS HARD TO GROW FOR A WHILE -- WE WERE DRAWING ON THE SAME MASS...!
THAT MAKES SENSE. THAT MUST BE IT.
IF NOT FOR THAT, I'D NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ESCAPE, NEVER HAVE FOUND MY WAY TO LIFE AGAIN --
-- TAKEN BACK MY TRUE PLACE...
YOUR PLACE?!
YOU'RE THE FAKE! YOU'RE THE COPY, THE INTRUDER -- !
HAH!
NO, IT'S YOU -- YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOOK OVER, FORCED ME OUT. YOU'RE THE USURPER, THE PHONY.
AND YOU'VE BEEN ONE FOR A LONG TIME...!
THAT'S A LIE!
THAT'S A DAMNED LIE!

OH, IS IT? I WAS ANT-MAN, AND I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH, TOUGH ENOUGH. I DIDN'T COMPARE TO THE OTHER HEROES -- AND JAN LIKED THEM!
SO I REMADE MYSELF -- INTO GIANT-MAN, THEN GOLIATH! BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH! THAT'S WHEN I REMADE MYSELF YET AGAIN -- INTO YELLOW-JACKET.
I'M THE ONE THAT WON JAN!
NO. THAT WAS A MISTAKE -- IT WAS THE MISTAKE! I'D GOTTEN SLOPPY, STARTED MAKING ERRORS -- LIKE USING MY BRAIN-PATTERNS TO CREATE ULTRON!
I WAS CRAZY THEN -- OVERCOME BY CHEMICAL FUMES!
YOU'RE A MISTAKE -- A LUNATIC!
YOU WISH!
I'M THE BRAVE ONE! THE HERO!
YOU'RE A NIGHTMARE!
YOU'RE EVERYTHING THAT EVER WENT WRONG IN MY LIFE -- EVERY MISTAKE I EVER MADE!
AH-AH!
YOU'RE AN INSECT -- AND YOU NEED TO BE STEPPED ON!
AND, IN THIS PLACE THAT IS NOT A PLACE --
-- THE GROUND SHAKES -- AND A LOW, SOFT MOANING CAN BARELY BE HEARD, ALL AROUND --

WHILE, IN CALLEYVILLE...
...LUNATIC...
...GLORY-HOUND...
HMM.
THIS IS... ODD...
...COWARD...
...SISSY-BOY...
SOMETHING'S GOING WRONG, MR. TREMONT -- I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR FACE.
TELL ME WHAT IT IS -- WHAT'S HAPPENING!
PLEASE -- FORMALITY INTERFERES WITH OUR ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND, SPIRIT TO SPIRIT. CALL ME JONATHAN.
AND THESE THINGS ALWAYS COMES IN THREES, IN MY EXPERIENCE. WE HAVE TWO FORCES IN OPPOSITION HERE, TWO FRAGMENTS.
BUT I DO NOT KNOW HENRY WELL, AND DO NOT KNOW WHAT THAT THIRD FACTOR MIGHT BE.
I KNOW.
AT LEAST -- I THINK I KNOW. THE THIRD FACTOR, THE RIFT BETWEEN THEM... IT'S...
...IT'S ME.
THAT WOULD BE... MOST UNUSUAL. BUT THERE IS MUCH WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND, MUCH I CANNOT KNOW AS FACT.
TELL ME, THEN. ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE A RISK TO SAVE THIS MAN? TO PUT YOUR OWN SOUL IN DANGER?
I'LL DO ANYTHING, JONATHAN. ANYTHING IT TAKES.

THEN CALM YOURSELF, JANET. CALM YOURSELF, CLEAR YOUR MIND. THINK OF NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL. NOTHING EXCEPT...
...HIM.
AND, AS JANET VAN DYNE FEELS HERSELF ROOTED TO THE SPOT -- AND YET LIFTING, WAFTING UPWARD LIKE A BREEZE ON A SUMMER EVENING --
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS HE'S DOING... DELROY, IS IT?
YEAH, IT'S DELROY. DELROY GARRETT, JR.
AN' NO -- I DON'T HAVE THE FIRST CLUE. BUT I'LL TELL YOU THIS -- IF ANYONE CAN CURE HANK, IT'S JONATHAN TREMONT. I'D BET MY LIFE ON HIM.
I ALREADY DID, A WHILE BACK.
HAVEN'T REGRETTED IT FOR A SECOND.
I'VE BEEN OUT OF THE LOOP, DELROY -- AWAY FROM THE TEAM, AND THEN STATIONED AT THE ASTEROID MONITOR BASE. SO TELL ME --
-- TELL ME ABOUT THE TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING -- AND WHY THERE'S SUCH TENSION BETWEEN YOU AND THE AVENGERS OVER IT.
UH-UH. I'M NOT DOIN' ANYTHING COULD GET ME ACCUSED OF TRYIN' TO CONVERT PEOPLE.
TOO MANY AVENGERS ALREADY HALF-THINK I'M A SPY -- THINK THE UNDERSTANDING'S OUT TO GET THEM. NO OFFENSE, MONICA --
-- BUT IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRIUNES, THERE'S BROCHURES IN THE LOBBY.
OKAY, IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT.
I'LL GO FOR A WALK, STRETCH MY LEGS.
MAYBE I'LL FIND THE LOBBY...

AND...
HUH -- ?
I DON'T -- WHERE IS THIS PLACE?
AND THIS COSTUME -- WHY THIS, WHY NOW? IT'S SO OLD...?
JAN! OH, LORD, JAN -- NO! GO BACK! GO BACK BEFORE...
JANNIE!
BABY! C'MERE AND PLANT A BIG ONE ON THESE EVER-LOVIN' LIPS, HUH?
TELL THIS BIG MOOK, WILLYA? TELL HIM I'M THE ONE YOU LOVE -- I'M THE REAL --
NO!
DON'T YOU GET NEAR HER! YOU'RE NOT FIT TO --! SHE'S GOT TO BE PROTECTED! FROM YOU -- FROM US!
HUH? I'VE GOT TO BE... PROTECTED?
HEY! WATCH THE MATERIAL!
PROTECTED... FROM YOU?

YES! DON'T YOU SEE? HE'S DANGEROUS!
YOU MARRIED HIM -- BUT HE WAS CRAZY, WASN'T RIGHT! AND THEN LATER, WHEN THINGS WENT BAD --
-- HE WAS THE ONE WHO HIT YOU, JAN! THE ONE WHO HURT YOU!
PLEASE, HONEY. YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME!
HE'S IMPULSIVE, THOUGHTLESS -- HE JUST REACTS! LEAPS HEADLONG INTO TROUBLE, LASHES OUT WITHOUT KNOWING WHO HE'S... HE'S...
HE'S GOT TO BE KEPT LOCKED UP, LOCKED AWAY -- KEPT AWAY FROM YOU, SO YOU'RE NEVER HURT LIKE THAT AGAIN...!
AND THEN -- SHE MEETS THE OTHER ONE'S EYES -- AND SHE KNOWS. SHE UNDERSTANDS.
SHE CAN'T BRING HERSELF TO SAY IT, NOT FLAT-OUT LIKE THAT. BUT HE CAN...
THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED.
YOU WERE SCARED -- SCARED YOU'D LOSE CONTROL AGAIN, THAT YOU'D GO CRAZY AND HURT JAN AGAIN --
-- SO YOU SUPPRESSED HIM.
YOUR IMPULSIVE, EMOTIONAL, EXPRESSIVE SIDE. YOU SUPPRESSED IT AND DIDN'T LET IT OUT.
UNTIL KULAN GATH. UNTIL IT BROKE FREE -- FORMED ITSELF A BODY OUT OF THE EXTRADIMENSIONAL BIO-MASS I USE TO GROW.
UNTIL THE MONSTER GOT LOOSE...!

CHAPTER THREE: SECRETS WITHIN
PHOTON STROLLS ALONG, TAKING IN THE FACILITY. SHE HAS NOT YET FOUND THE LOBBY --
-- AND THE ACOLYTES SHE PASSES --
-- SOME LOOK AT HER AND SMILE, SOME GLARE --
-- BUT THEN --
PHOTON! THIS WAY!
HUH?
SHE'S ABOUT TO SHIFT TO ENERGY FORM -- TO PURE LIGHT, MAKE HER ESCAPE -- BUT --
EASY, PHOTON --
-- IT'S US. WE'RE AVENGERS.
WH-WHAT?
JUSTICE? FIRESTAR? WHAT --
SHH! NOT SO LOUD! THERE'S --
IT'S OKAY -- I'M SCRAMBLING THE SURVEILLANCE DEVICES WITH A LOW-LEVEL MICROWAVE FIELD.
WE CAN TALK PLAINLY.
SORRY, PHOTON -- WE DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU. BUT WE HAD TO TALK.
OFFICIALLY, WE'RE ON VACATION IN FRANCE -- BUT WE REALLY WENT UNDERCOVER HERE, AT IRON MAN'S REQUEST, TO CHECK THE TRIUNES OUT.
THE AVENGERS... ARE SPYING ON THE TRIUNES?
DON'T THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO PRIVACY?

THESE JERKS STIRRED UP ANTI-MUTANT PROTESTS -- JUST TO MAKE THE AVENGERS LOOK BAD.
I'LL RESPECT THEIR RIGHTS WHEN THEY RESPECT MINE.
BUT --
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A REPORT OUT -- BUT WE HAVE TO TELL SOMEONE. THIS WAY --
-- AND DOWN HERE --
THIS COMPLEX -- IT'S MUCH LARGER THAN I THOUGHT ---
OH, YEAH. PLENTY MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE HERE.
OUT HERE, THEN AROUND THAT CORNER --
-- AND --
-- THERE WE GO.
THAT -- LOOKS LIKE --
YOU BET. IT'S A SPACESHIP.

ONE OF THE TENETS OF THE TRIUNE FAITH IS THAT THERE'S A GREAT EVIL COMING -- SOME GIANT THREAT FROM SPACE.
THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO PREPARE TO BATTLE IT.
AND THIS THREAT...?
COULD BE TREMONT JUST MADE IT UP, TO STIR THE TROOPS.
THE THING IS, THE SHIP -- I'VE SEEN THE PLANS.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE POWERED BY THE SPIRITS OF THE ACOLYTES. BY THEIR BELIEF.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL FLY OR NOT, BUT THE PSYCHIC INDUCTION GRIDS --
-- I'M WORRIED THEY COULD KILL EVERY BELIEVER IN THE COMPOUND, IF THEY EVER TRY TO LAUNCH...!
THIS IS ALL GOING A LITTLE TOO FAST FOR ME.
SPYING ON A CHURCH.
A HOLY SPACESHIP TO BATTLE SOME UNKNOWN EVIL.
LIVES AT RISK.
WE DON'T THINK THEY'LL LAUNCH SOON. BUT WE NEED SOMEONE TO TELL IRON MAN AND CAP. CAN YOU DO THAT...?
AND AS PHOTON TAKES IT ALL IN --
YOU DESIGNED THAT COSTUME WHEN I WAS GOLIATH -- WHEN I WAS ME.
NO, THAT'S THE COSTUME SHE MET ME IN...!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
WHY DOES IT MATTER?
IT'S UP TO YOU, BABE. WE'LL ABIDE BY YOUR DECISION.
TELL US WHICH ONE YOU WANT, WHICH ONE IS RIGHT. WHICH ONE OF US LIVES... AND WHICH ONE GIVES UP THE GHOST, AND DIES?
WHAAAT?
YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT? ABOUT WHICH ONE OF YOU GETS TO BE REAL -- AND I'M SUPPOSED TO DECIDE?

OH, HANK.
I WAS WRONG. I'M NOT THE THIRD FACTOR. THIS ISN'T ABOUT ME.
IT'S ABOUT YOU.
BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT WHICH ONE I LOVE, OR WHICH ONE GETS TO LIVE. I LOVE HANK PYM -- AND I WANT A WHOLE, HEALTHY HANK PYM.
NOT A FRAGMENT.
WE'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
JUST TELL US --
NO. DON'T YOU SEE? WHAT I WANT FOR YOU, WHAT I THINK -- IT DOESN'T MATTER, NOT IN THE LONG RUN. IT'S NOT ABOUT ME.
SO MANY OF YOUR PROBLEMS, IT SEEMS, COME FROM TRYING TO BE WHAT YOU THINK SOMEONE ELSE WANTS. MORE POWERFUL, MORE HEROIC, MORE... WHATEVER.
BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT.
WHATEVER YOU ARE -- WHOEVER YOU ARE -- IT'S GOT TO COME FROM INSIDE. FROM YOU.
I'M SORRY. I LOVE YOU, BUT I CAN'T HELP YOU.
THIS IS SOMETHING YOU'VE GOT TO SOLVE YOURSELF -- FOR YOURSELF - OR YOU'LL NEVER BE REALLY WHOLE.
MAYBE THERE IS A THIRD FORCE, A THIRD FACTOR...
...BUT IT'S NOT ME.

HOW'S IT GOING?
WASP JUST WOKE UP. DOESN'T LOOK THAT HAPPY.
I... HADN'T REALIZED, BEFORE -- JUST HOW DEEP THE HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE AVENGERS AND THE TRIUNES WENT.
KIND OF A MINEFIELD, SOMETIMES.
YOU MUST BE...
...PRETTY ANGRY ABOUT IT ALL...
SO --
YOU! YOU CHASED HER AWAY!
AGAIN!
NO.
YES.
MAYBE.
BUT YOU'RE JUST ANGRY -- LETTING OFF STEAM. WHATEVER HAPPENED, WE BOTH DID IT.
AND SHE'S RIGHT. IT'S NOT ABOUT HER --
-- BUT ABOUT US.
YEAH.
SHE'S RIGHT.

THE THING IS -- AND I HATE TO ADMIT IT, WITH YOU HERE, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY WAY AROUND IT --
I ADMIRE YOU.
YOU'RE BRAVE, YOU'RE FEARLESS. YOU'RE EVERYTHING I WANT TO BE.
I KNOW.
BUT IT'S NOT SUCH A PARTY, BEING ME. I CAUSE TROUBLE. I MAKE MISTAKES.
I ALMOST DOOMED THE AVENGERS RECENTLY, AND PROBABLY MOST OF EUROPE, BEING TOO MUCH OF A COWBOY AGAINST THE HULK, IN GREECE.
BUT YOU --
YOU'RE SMART, YOU'RE CAREFUL. YOU THINK THINGS THROUGH. I DON'T HAVE THAT.
AND I WISH I DID.
YOU MEAN THAT.
YOU WANT TO BE ME AS MUCH AS I WANT TO BE YOU.
YELLOWJACKET NODS -- AND IN THAT MOMENT, THEY BOTH FEEL IT --
-- THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE THERE --
-- SOMEONE APPROACHING --

NAH. IT AIN'T SO MUCH I'M MAD -- I MEAN, I WAS MAD ABOUT IT, FOR A WHILE. BUT NOW IT'S JUST SAD. MISERABLE.
IT'S LIKE -- YOU GREW UP BLACK, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. NEVER KNOWING, IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, WHETHER IT'S BECAUSE YOU MADE A MISTAKE --
-- OR BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF YOUR SKIN.
IS IT YOU... OR THEM?
I FOUGHT THAT, WENT ALL OUT TO PROVE MYSELF. AND I BECAME AN OLYMPIC CHAMPION. BUT I SCREWED THAT UP, TOO.
ALL MY OWN FAULT.
AND THE TRIUNES -- THE TRIUNES SAVED ME. TURNED MY LIFE AROUND, HELPED ME FIND A BALANCE.
SO I GET TO JOIN THE AVENGERS -- AND POW, THERE IT ALL IS AGAIN.
THEY'RE SUSPICIOUS OF THE TRIUNES. AN' THAT MAKES 'EM SUSPICIOUS OF ME.
AN' I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW IF THE TRIUNES ARE UP TO SOMETHING DIRTY OR NOT. I DON'T KNOW IF THE AVENGERS ARE RIGHT TO BE SUSPICIOUS.
BUT I KNOW THE TRIUNES MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY -- AND I CAN'T TURN MY BACK ON THAT. AND I LIKE BEING AN AVENGER.
AND THERE IT IS BETWEEN US, YOU KNOW? THEY LOOK AT ME, AND I FEEL THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US.
AND I DON'T KNOW. IS IT ME? DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG? IS IT THEM, BEIN' UNFAIR?
AND IN THE END IT DOESN'T MATTER, I'M AN OUTSIDER. THE WALLS ARE TOO HIGH.
AND I'LL NEVER GET PAST 'EM.

TRIATHLON -- DELROY -- I'VE GOT TO SAY --
-- YOU'RE WORRYING ABOUT THIS WAY TOO MUCH.
HUH?
LOOK, LET'S SAY THE TRIUNES ARE DIRTY. WHAT OF IT? THE AVENGERS HAVE WELCOMED MEMBERS WITH ASTONISHING PASTS.
THE SCARLET WITCH AND QUICKSILVER WERE MEMBERS OF MAGNETO'S BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS. THE VISION TRIED TO KILL THEM ALL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE TRIUNES EITHER.
BUT THAT DOESN'T HAVE TO AFFECT YOU AND THE AVENGERS AT ALL.
BUT --
LOOK, YOU'RE THE NEW GUY. THEY'RE OLD FRIENDS, GOING BACK YEARS, THAT'S ALL.
TRUST ME, ONCE OTHER NEW AVENGERS JOIN, YOU WON'T FEEL THE SAME WAY. I'VE BEEN THERE -- I KNOW HOW IT FEELS.
I FELT LIKE I WAS ON THE OUTSKIRTS, UNTIL OTHER PEOPLE CAME IN, AND LOOKED AT ME AS "OLD GUARD."
SILVERCLAW MUST FEEL LIKE JUST AS MUCH OF AN OUTSIDER AS YOU DO, NERVOUS AND UNSURE -- EVEN WITH HER TIES TO JARVIS.
AND THE JACK OF HEARTS -- WELL, HE'LL NEED SOMEONE TO SHOW HIM THE ROPES, WON'T HE?
HANG IN THERE, DELROY. YOU'VE GOT A GOOD HEART, AND YOU FOLLOW IT --
-- YOU DID YOUR BEST FOR HANK, GOT JAN TO BRING HIM DOWN HERE, WHATEVER HER FEARS.
YOU'LL DO FINE.

WHAT --
WHO...?
AND THE FIGURE COMES FORWARD --
THEIR FIRST IDENTITY -- ANT-MAN.
AND HE GROWS -- CHANGING --
HE DOESN'T SPEAK. BUT THEY KNOW WHO -- AND WHAT -- HE IS.
THE THIRD MAN.
THE PART OF THEM THEY HAVE NEVER ACCEPTED, HENRY PYM. FLAWED, IMPERFECT. HUMAN.
AND HE WAITS.
I WORRIED ABOUT WHO I WAS -- HOW I WAS PERCEIVED -- FOR SO LONG. BUT IT WAS STUPID.
THERE'LL ALWAYS BE SOMEONE BRAVER OUT THERE -- SOMEONE MORE POWERFUL --
ALWAYS BE SOMEONE SMARTER, TOO. SOMEONE WHO MESSES UP LESS.
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT COUNTS.

NO MORE PRETENDING -- OR HIDING. NO MORE TRYIN' TO BE SOMEONE ELSE. ALL WE NEED TO BE --
-- IS HANK PYM. THE BEST HANK PYM WE CAN BE.
THE THIRD MAN REACHES OUT -- AND THEY STEP FORWARD TO MEET HIM.
AND HE SMILES. FRIENDLY, RELAXED. UNWORRIED.
AND WITH THAT, THEY BEGIN TO SHRINK --
-- AND HE GROWS.
BUT IT'S NOT JUST HIM GROWING -- IT'S THEM TOO --
GROWING -- GROWING --

H-HUH?
I -- I FEEL --
HANK!
HANK, YOU'RE AWAKE!
HOW DO YOU FEEL? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
FOR A MOMENT, HE SAYS NOTHING -- JUST SMILES A SLOW, CONFIDENT, RELAXED SMILE --
-- AND DRAWS HER CLOSE --
YEAH, HONEY -- I'M ALL RIGHT.
I FEEL FINE --
-- BETTER THAN I HAVE IN A LONG, LONG TIME...!

AND, IN THE OBSERVATION GALLERY...
A SPACE-SHIP...?
UH-HUH.
THE TRIPLE-EVIL, OF COURSE -- JONATHAN'S SURE THEY'RE COMING. BUT A SPACESHIP...?
HEY, GUYS!
LOOK WHO'S UP AND AROUND!
SORRY FOR ALL THE DRAMA, FOLKS. AND THANKS FOR THE HELP.
HUH?
HEY, ALL RIGHT!
THAT'S WONDERFUL, JAN.
I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU BOTH!
AND YOU, DELROY -- YOU'RE THE 100% ABSOLUTE BEST! I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO THANK YOU ENOUGH --
-- BUT THANKS!
AW, THAT'S OKAY...
AND TRIATHLON CATCHES PHOTON'S EYE, AND SHE GRINS.
"SEE?" HER EXPRESSION SEEMS TO SAY.
"IT ALL WORKS OUT..."

EPILOGUE
A FEW HOURS LATER...
...A REAL PLEASURE, JANET. AND IF YOU NEED ANYTHING ELSE, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO CALL.
THANKS, JONATHAN. JUST -- THANKS.
TIME TO GO -- TIME TO GET BACK TO THE WARS --
-- BUT AS THEY GO, PHOTON SCANS THE CROWD --
-- AND THERE THEY ARE.
SHE NODS, JUST SLIGHTLY --
-- AND THEY ACKNOWLEDGE IT.
THEY'LL KEEP ON WITH THEIR MISSION. AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS.
THERE'S MORE TO BE DONE. THERE'S ALWAYS MORE.
BUT FOR A MOMENT, AT LEAST, THESE AVENGERS CAN BREATHE EASY, KNOWING THAT A LONG-FOUGHT BATTLE IS FINALLY OVER...
...AND THAT IT ENDED IN VICTORY.
...AND THAT'S THE FACTS!

STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE MIGHTY
AVENGERS!
GLORY? EDWIN.
I'LL HAVE TO MEET YOU AT THE RESTAURANT. THE AVENGERS ARE AWAY, AND THERE ARE A FEW QUERIES FROM THEIR SECURITY LIAISON.
JARVIS THE BUTLER
I SHOULD RESPOND TO THEM. IT WON'T TAKE LONG.
PING
YOU'VE GOT MAIL!
HOUSE CLEANING
KURT BUSIEK WRITER
IAN CHURCHILL PENCILER
NORM RAPMUND INKS TOM SMITH COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT/AD LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT ED. TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT
From: dfreeman@cosha.gov
To: ejarvis@avengers.org
Our files are in slight disarray, so I have a few questions:
1. Before the Onslaught disaster, the Wasp was in an insectoid form, and now she is not. How did that happen?
2. We have reference in our files to three deaths at the hands of Iron Man, with a note saying that the cases are closed. What was that about?

EDWIN JARVIS SIGHS. HE DOES NOT LIKE REMEMBERING THAT PERIOD.
HE HAD SEEN TONY STARK BROUGHT HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL AS AN INFANT, AFTER ALL. WATCHED HIM GROW FROM A BOY TO A MAN.
REMEMBERING HIM LIKE THAT -- RAGING, INCOHERENT, ANGRY --
MOST OF IT, HE CAN ONLY IMAGINE -- FROM THE FILES, THE ACCOUNTS OF THE OTHERS, BUT STILL --
-- IT MAKES HIM FEEL SO OLD. SO OLD, SO TIRED, AND SO TERRIBLY HELPLESS.
AND THE THOUGHT OF THOSE INNOCENT WOMEN WRENCHES AS WELL -- THE THREE WHO DIED AT HIS HAND --
THE STRANGELY-COSTUMED WOMAN THEY SUSPECT TO HAVE BEEN RITA deMARA -- THE FEMALE YELLOWJACKET --
MARILLA, THE INHUMAN NANNY TO CRYSTAL'S DAUGHTER, LUNA --
AMANDA CHANEY, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER TO THE TEAM FORCE WORKS --
EVEN JANET VAN DYNE, THE WASP -- ONE OF HIS MOST LONGSTANDING ALLIES -- WAS INJURED --
-- STRUCK BY A REPULSOR RAY DURING HIS MADNESS --

-- AND WHILE HER LIFE WAS SAVED -- IT WAS AT THE COST OF HER HUMANITY.
STILL, SHE NEVER FALTERED. IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES THAT HAD CORRUPTED IRON MAN, SHE PROVED HER HEROISM.
AS, IN THE END --
-- DID TONY STARK, SACRIFICING HIMSELF TO SAVE A WORLD.
IT'S ALL OVER, AVENGERS.
HE'S GONE.
BUT STARK'S DEATH DID NOT END THINGS --
HEY, JARV -- WHAT IT IS!
-- FOR ANOTHER TONY STARK HAD BEEN BROUGHT OVER FROM ANOTHER TIMELINE -- A YOUNGER TONY STARK --
-- AND JARVIS'S HEART COULD NOT HELP BUT GO OUT TO HIM, FOR HE WAS SO LIKE THE BOY HE HAD WATCHED GROW UP --
-- AND SO LIKE THE HERO IRON MAN HAD BEEN, AS WELL.
FOR THIS NEW TONY STARK, TOO, FOUGHT ALONGSIDE THE AVENGERS --
BRANGG
-- AND WHEN THE TIME CAME TO BE COUNTED --

-- HE PROVED HIMSELF EVERY INCH THE HERO HIS PREDECESSOR WAS.
HE, WITH THE AVENGERS AND OTHER HEROES, LAID DOWN HIS LIFE TO STOP THE RAMPAGE OF THE CREATURE KNOWN AS ONSLAUGHT --
-- OR SO HE THOUGHT.
FOR MONTHS LATER, AFTER LIVING ANOTHER LIFE IN AN OTHER-DIMENSIONAL WORLD, THE HEROES RETURNED --
-- AND IRON MAN WAS AMONG THEM.
BUT WHICH IRON MAN? THAT WAS THE QUESTION.
I -- I REMEMBER -- EVERYTHING!
THREE LIVES, THREE CHILDHOODS. BUT -- HOW?
YOU'RE BACK, TONY.
ISN'T THAT WHAT MATTERS?
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, CAP -- YOU BARELY REMEMBER OUR TIME IN THE OTHER WORLD. BUT I --
-- I WAS DEAD! IT WASN'T ME WHO WENT INTO ONSLAUGHT -- IT WAS THE TEENAGER! I STILL REMEMBER HIM -- REMEMBER BOTH OF THEM --
-- BUT IT'S FADING, LIKE A DREAM!
HOW CAN I BE... BACK?!
HE INVESTIGATED HIS OWN GRAVE, BUT THE BODY WAS GONE, AND --
BORN AND DIED AHEAD OF HIS TIME
THIS ENERGY, HAPPY -- IT SEEMS TO HAVE VAPORIZED THE GRAVE --
-- AND THERE ARE LINGERING TRACES OF IT IN MY SYSTEM AS WELL...
SO WHAT DO YOU FIGURE, BOSS?

HMM.
As far as the Avengers can determine...
...it was Franklin Richards, the mutant who cast them into the other reality in the first place...
...doing his best to set things right upon their return. But he restored the heroes as he remembered them...
...and thus the Wasp was returned to her human form, and even Hawkeye's damaged hearing was cured.
MMM.
HOW BEST TO PUT IT...?
...it seems that both the Iron Man that killed those women while under someone else's control, and the Iron Man that replaced him...
...are both dead now, dead and gone.
As for Iron Man...
TAKA TAK TAKA
TAKA TAK TAKA TAK TAKA
I am sure the Avengers would be willing to discuss it further with you if you choose. But I can assure you...
...that neither Tony Stark nor the present Iron Man would rest if there were any continuing question of guilt...
I HAVE TO KNOW, AVENGERS.
AM I GUILTY?
SHOULD I BE PUNISHED FOR THOSE DEATHS?

YOU CONVENED THIS COURT-MARTIAL TO DETERMINE JUST THAT, TONY.
WE'VE GONE OVER ALL THE EVIDENCE CAREFULLY. AND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, I'VE GOT TO SAY --
-- THAT YOU WERE CLEARLY ACTING UNDER KANG'S CONTROL, NOT OUT OF FREE WILL -- AND WEREN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY OF YOUR ACTIONS.
THE AUTHORITIES AGREE. WE PARTICIPATED IN THE OFFICIAL INQUEST, AND BASED ON OUR TESTIMONY --
-- THEY DECIDED THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO FILE CHARGES.
IT WAS KANG WHO KILLED THOSE WOMEN, OLD FRIEND. NOT YOU.
JARVIS MAKES A NOTE -- CHECK AND SEE IF THE FILES HAVE BEEN UPDATED.
IT WAS NOT KANG, THE AVENGERS DISCOVERED LATER -- BUT IMMORTUS, POSING AS KANG. STILL, THE PRINCIPLE IS THE SAME.
DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP, SHELLHEAD. IT'S A BAD THING, WHAT HAPPENED, AN' I'D GIVE ANYTHING IF WE COULD UNDO IT.
BUT IT AIN'T YOUR FAULT.
THAT'S... NOT GOOD ENOUGH, HAWKEYE.
I MAY NOT BE LEGALLY GUILTY -- BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT MY FAULT. MAYBE IT WASN'T MY FINGER ON THE TRIGGER --
-- BUT I BUILT THE GUN. AND I DIDN'T TAKE ENOUGH PRECAUTIONS TO KEEP SOMEONE ELSE FROM USING IT.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING I CAN FORGET -- IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'LL EVER FORGET -- AND I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
AND HE DID, REFLECTS JARVIS. HE CREATED TECHNOLOGY TO SHIELD THE MIND FROM TAKEOVER --
-- INSTALLED IT IN HIS ARMOR, IN THE MANSION --

BUT ENOUGH BAD MEMORIES. WHAT'S NEXT?
From: dfreeman@cosha.gov
To: ejarvis@avengers.org
Another question:
My files show several references to Captain America's shield being an alloy of adamantium and vibranium -- but I also have data indicating that adamantium wasn't invented until long after the shield was created. How can this be?
AH.
MUCH MORE STRAIGHT-FORWARD.
No -- there's no adamantium in Captain America's shield, though the confusion is understandable.
The shield was created by Dr. Myron Maclain, while attempting to create super-strong metals for the U.S. Army.
He was attempting to bond a sample of Wakandan vibranium to a new steel alloy, without success --
-- until one night, he dozed off in his lab, and awoke to find that the metals had bonded, though he did not know why.
He cast the resultant metal into a disc shape, for testing --
-- and that disc is what became Captain America's shield.
Maclain was unable to duplicate the process, however --
He tried for decades to re-create his miracle metal --
-- and has to this day been unable to discover just what it was that bonded the steel and the vibranium.

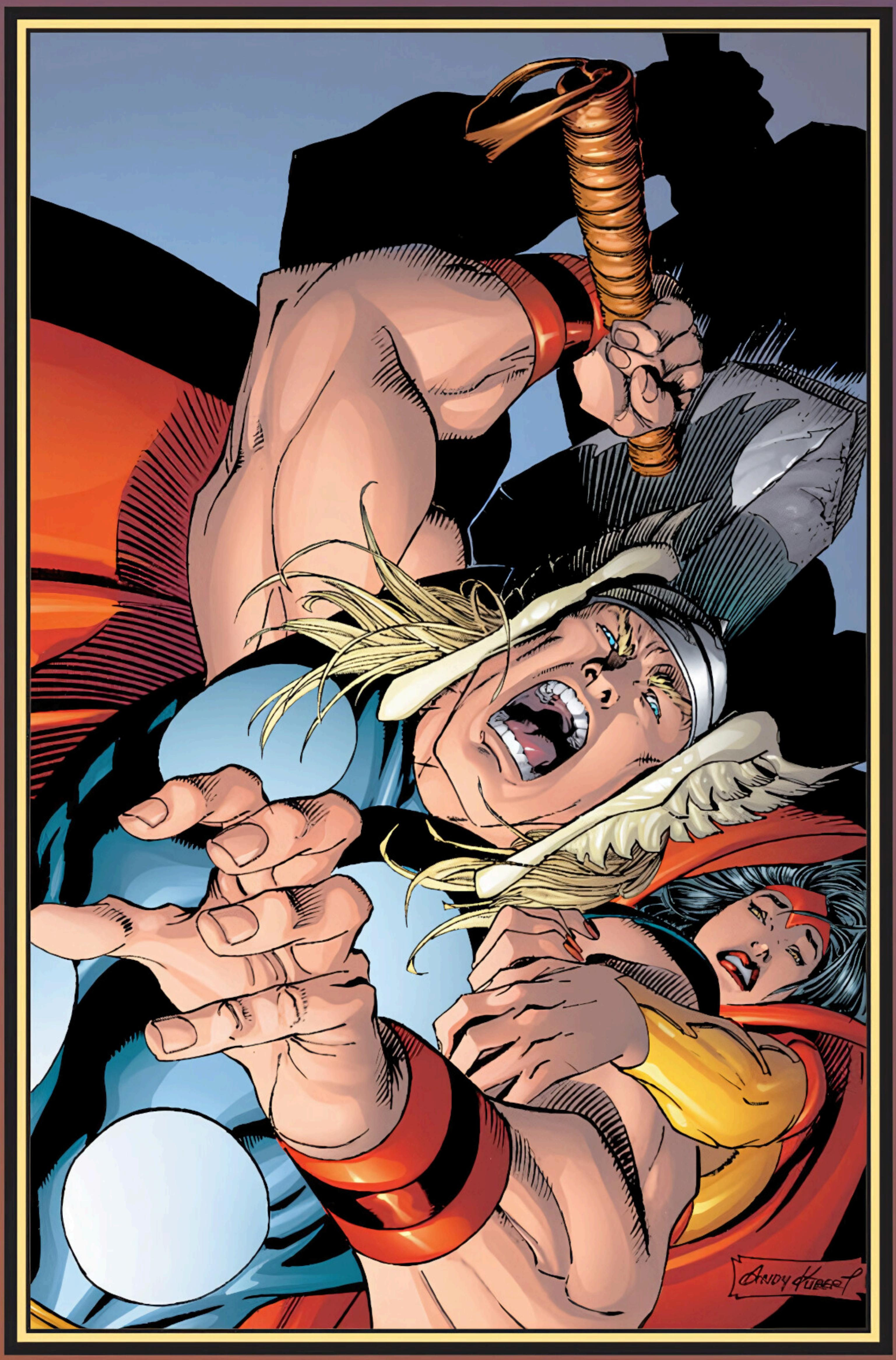
-- but the closest he was able to come was his far later creation, adamantium.
It's an impressive achievement, to be sure -- a metal almost completely impervious to damage --
-- even at the hands of the mighty Thor.
So it's understandable that people occasionally confuse Dr. Maclain's two great discoveries.
But it's no more than that -- the shield pre-dates adamantium by decades.
SHAANNG
ONE MORE. LET'S SEE ...
From: dfreeman@cosha.gov
To: ejarvis@avengers.org
One more question, if you would: We've had queries -- is the Falcon a mutant? We have conflicting reports...
OH, GOOD GRIEF!
THIS AGAIN?! WHEN WILL IT END?
TWO SECURITY ADVISORS I'VE EXPLAINED IT TO... TEN SENATORS, TWELVE CONGRESSMEN AND COUNTLESS REPORTERS!
AND STILL THEY ASK!
No, Mr. Freeman. The Falcon is not, repeat NOT, a mutant. His only parahuman ability is his mental link to his trained falcon. And that, as our records clearly state, was created by the Red Skull, via the Cosmic Cube, for complex reasons of his own.
The Falcon was once pursued by a Sentinel, but it was damaged, and must have been malfunctioning.
See attached files...
WELL, THAT'S DONE, AT LEAST. NOW TO...
YOU'VE GOT MAIL!
SIGH I'LL NEVER GET TO DINNER...
SOURCES:
IRON MAN/WASP: AVENGERS VOL. 1 #393-395, AVENGERS: THE CROSSING, FORCE WORKS #19, IRON MAN #327-328, ONSLAUGHT: MARVEL UNIVERSE.
CAP'S SHIELD/ADAMANTIUM: CAPTAIN AMERICA VOL. 1 #303, AVENGERS VOL. 1 #66
FALCON: CAPTAIN AMERICA VOL. 1 #186, FALCON #2.

Avengers #41

Avengers #42

Avengers #43

Avengers 2001 Annual



Avengers #44

Avengers #45

Avengers #46

Avengers #47

Avengers #48

Avengers #49

Avengers #50

Avengers #51

Avengers #52

Avengers #53

Avengers #54

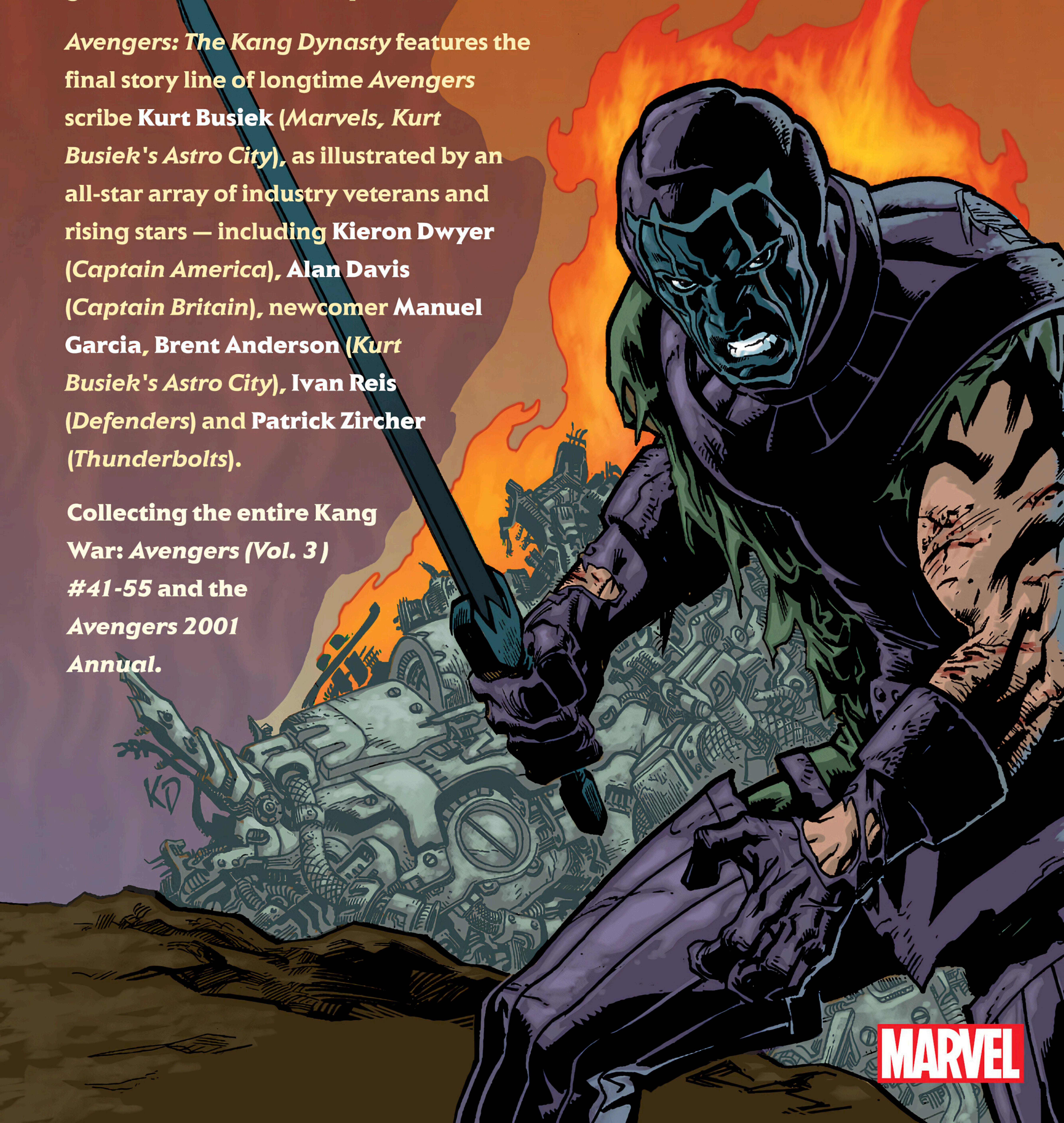
Avengers #55

THIS IS NO MERE BATTLE: THIS IS WAR

...WITH THE FATE OF THE WORLD AT STAKE!

Captain America, Thor, Iron Man and Earth's Mightiest Heroes — beaten and imprisoned! The tyrannical, time-traveling conqueror called Kang — triumphant!

Always, the Avengers have defended the planet against the forces of evil. When duty calls, these legendary heroes answer — fighting valiantly until justice prevails. But Kang is a foe unlike any other. He cares not for material riches; his ultimate goal is nothing short of global domination, to impose his will over all.

Avengers: The Kang Dynasty features the final story line of longtime *Avengers* scribe **Kurt Busiek** (*Marvels, Kurt Busiek's Astro City*), as illustrated by an all-star array of industry veterans and rising stars — including **Kieron Dwyer** (*Captain America*), **Alan Davis** (*Captain Britain*), newcomer **Manuel Garcia**, **Brent Anderson** (*Kurt Busiek's Astro City*), **Ivan Reis** (*Defenders*) and **Patrick Zircher** (*Thunderbolts*).

Collecting the entire Kang War: *Avengers (Vol. 3) #41-55* and the *Avengers 2001 Annual.*